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September 1989

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by Jon Rogel

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TOP SPIN

A church I go to has anti-abortion literature and petitions spread out on a shelf against the back wall. The Church's intentions are clearly sincere: It is, after all, a spiritual not intellectual entity. But when I see that stuff, my stomach turns, in dismay, because I feel the Church, (of all institutions, with its mandate of celibacy), is preaching about something it knows little about.

I find a lot of people feel about their religion the way they do about their grandmothers: an amorphous love for someone who seems to no longer relate to the modern world, mixed with, depending on the grandchild, varying degrees of inbred respect. And I think this is why so many people abandon religion—although the act is so much more passive than that, almost like a man not actually divorcing his wife, but simply forgetting where he left her. It's not that most people can't tolerate the few ceremonial obligations or even the moral commoners of each faith, it's that 20th century adults, pulled by the tides of 20th century reality, find it hard to reciprocate the edicts of ancient religions with their lives. This may well be spiritual failure, but it's a reality nonetheless. The truth is a person can believe in God but find it too difficult to swallow the prescribed pills.

One of the largest pills for a Catholic, hence the literature at the back of the church, is that abortion is a mortal sin. But sin is theoretical and pregnancy is not, and contemplating abortion is one of life's hardest decisions. This is the abortion issue's imperfect equation: the impossible relationship between the theory of sin and the reality of life.

What is missed in the controversy over whether or not abortion should be legal is that this is actually not a moral issue, although the pro-lifers insist it is, forcing the pro-choicers to defend an uncomfortable and virtually impossible position. Abortion is not an issue of God and his faithful, beleaguered followers versus the heathens. Although each person has to deal with their own conscience as to their participation in an abortion—and therefore, in a way, deal with their own spirituality—the reality is that an abortion is a physical dilemma foremost, a spiritual one second, and has to be dealt with in practical terms. The battle to preserve a woman's right to unrestricted abortion has to be fought on that clear understanding, I believe, or it will be lost and in the interim, before the right is regained, an inestimable amount of unnecessary suffering will have been incurred. All because a faction of society is intent on imposing its moral preferences on everyone. Which is a recurring blight in this country.

**Former Golden
Palominos diva
Syd Straw goes
solo, and wins.**



Jon Rappaport

Of course, there is a moral dilemma, and no doubt the overwhelming majority of people who are pro-choice, including the approximately one and a half million women a year who have abortions, struggle with it. Women who have abortions are doubtless emotionally scarred by them, at least to some degree. They of all people are not oblivious to the rights of the unborn child—rather it's the pro-lifers who more likely don't know what it feels like to repudiate a life inside them. It is, besides everything else, redundant for anyone to tell a woman considering an abortion that abortion is a tragedy.

Life is not always a perfectly equal crossroads. Sometimes people have to choose between tragedies, not tragedy and deliverance. The decision to abort a child is a painful sacrifice; a choice—maybe the right one, maybe not—made by someone attempting to preserve something. It is, finally, a primal choice, not an intellectual one and obviously not a spiritual one.

If Roe vs. Wade is overturned,

or access to abortions is greatly diminished, as the Supreme Court seems to want, it won't be a triumph of good over evil, as the anti-abortionists so mistakenly believe. It'll be the surrendering of an already unfortunate situation to the anarchy of back-alley abortionists and all the conscious and unconscious horrors of a desperate movement (like the presumably well-intentioned but insanely dangerous do-it-yourself abortion home video being marketed by the Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers). The last thing it'll stop is abortions.

Ironically, if they succeed, the abolitionists will have desecrated one of Christianity's central principles—freedom of choice was God's idea—and committed the terrible sin of pride, reviving the back alley abortion because they didn't feel, by their moral code, that abortions should exist. I wonder how many of them think of that.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.



**Public Enemy
rap king Chuck D
contemplates
the Fall.**

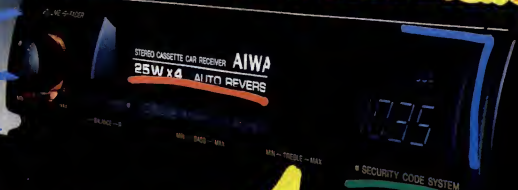
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POINT BLANK

Edited by Robin Reinhardt

Cure All

Thanks for another brilliant article on The Cure [July]. My only criticism, as with almost every other Cure article, is the comparison with New Order. Sure these two groups paralleled musically in the early 80s but the Cure's diversity and recent return to downbeat music seems so completely different and superior to New Order's electronic dance tracks that they needn't be compared anymore.

Michael Roberts
Avon, CT

Talking To The Taxman About Poetry

Thanks to Scott Cohen for a piece on Billy Bragg that finally did more than recount Bragg's political movement of the last 10 years [July]. You managed to capture some of the wit and sincerity of the man who puts on a more intimate and inspiring show than any act in rock today. The article reaffirmed my belief that if any poet can change a person's life, Billy Bragg can.

Terry Walsh
Minneapolis, MN

Express Yourself

John Leland devotes a whole column to arguing that one of the most high-profile cases of censorship—involving Madonna's "Like a Prayer" video and Pepsi—is no big deal, that the video is actually stripped of its impact because of the MTV medium [Singles, June]. Sorry, but this video was truly offensive—not to everyone, but to the defenders of the status quo. It is now apparently more than O.K. with the powers-that-be for Mississippi redneck preachers to be the morality cops for pop culture. Leland calls Madonna's won't to "create chaos

... a very irresponsible thing to do." Well not for those of us who find the current order intolerable. A lot of people got a big charge out of seeing the tables turned on those responsible churchmen and racists.

Connie Julian
New York, NY

Waving The Flag

Dread Scott Tyler and Michelle Shocked have their right to express their feelings and I'll fight to the death against those who would deny them that I "What Is The Proper Way to Display American Flag," June]. On the other hand, in my opinion, they are assholes. Tyler and Shocked burn the symbol of what allows them to do just that—express their opinion! We may not live up to our ideals in this country, but at least we have ideals and are free to have them. It seems these two are opportunists looking to make a name under a passé 60s sentiment.

Johnny Sundae
Merritt Island, FL

What is a flag? Is it a collection of sewn together fabrics or is it the symbol of a country where its citizens can dissent

and protest without having countless numbers of people shot and run down by armored vehicles? Whether or not the right to defile the flag is protected by the freedom of expression and speech will be handled by the courts. Legalities aside, I believe it is more importantly a question of respecting and offending others. Offending just to offend isn't art, it's hype. Don't believe the hype.

Tony Tee
Ft. Washington, MD

Pop Singer With A Blasphemous Tongue

I have never actually bought a copy of SPIN, but the intriguing cover photo of John Mellencamp [June] caught my eye and the fascinating interview induced me to buy. I was pleased to learn my impressions of JCM were right on target: a poet, with the heart of a lion, the mind of a philosopher, the soul of a hero and a blasphemous tongue. The world rarely praises a true hero, a prophet or a good noble man.

Jennifer Jo Darland
Bryan, TX

Sizing It Up

As always, SPIN gets the scoop. Thanks to Legs McNeil for revealing the before-now hidden correlation between a woman's musical talent and the size of her breasts ["Slut Metal," July]. I never would have guessed.

Sue Patterson
Princeton, NJ

Knights of Malta

Congratulations on another fascinating, daring and exceptionally well-done article ["Theirs Is The Kingdom of Heaven," July]. It's about time somebody in the mainstream media dared to print this sort of thing. If only the majority of the American masses realized, understood and cared about what actually goes on in organized religion and our government, they'd string up Ollie, exile Reagan, impeach Bush, purge the Vatican and put most of the televangelists in concentration camps.

Christopher Kirk
Lapeer, MI

ERRATA

Basically a quiet month, no real major screw-ups. Apologies to: Tim Pope, not Tony Pope, is the Cure's video director ["The Cure Melts Down," July]. The Deadhead sociology class touring with the Grateful Dead attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro ["Talking All That Jazz," June]. In "Slut Metal" [July], Legs McNeil confused two Cycle Sluts from Hell. Venus Penis Crusher is the "street wail with a bad perm" (bottom, pg. 46) and She-Fire is "Ginny, a former model from Minnesota" (pg. 48).



AMERICA'S POP HERO.



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HEAVY ROTATION

Staff Selections



Boogie Down Productions *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop* (Live/RCA) Deliberately raw and ungainly, yard music for the international black ghetto, BDP's preachy third album rocks the classroom harder than it rocks the party. But this is hip hop without boundaries; shorn of the need to make you dance fast, it speaks volumes. And makes you dance slow. (Leland)

Entouch *All Night* (Elektra) Relentlessly derivative and relentlessly hype, this is newer jack swing: party music for people who would rather munch on familiar samples than potato chips. No prerogatives here, but lots of neat talk about thighs. (Leland)

Frazier Chorus Sue (Virgin UK) Floaty and dreamy, flute and clarinet, hate-love lyrics and despondent whispers, London English raining down, washing the moody-gloom away. (Wright)

Martin L. Gore "Counterfeit e.p." (Mute/Sire) Not too far from Depeche Mode's roots, these six songs are so typical of Gore's coring, sensitive style, it's surprising he didn't actually write them. Or did he? (Reinhardt)

Don Henley *The End Of The Innocence* (Geffen) Stripped of all Californian specificity, Henley turns to Bruce Hornsby for inspiration and comes up with the title track, a song that assumes the elegiac grace "The Boys Of Summer" worked so hard to earn. Elsewhere, he works hard to give the word "heartland" two meanings and stalks state of the art pop cages like a trapped tiger. (Levy)

Prince *Batman* (Warner) Another Prince contradiction. While his recent intricate orchestrations come off as demos, these simple toss-offs scone like the fully realized funk. Deep and evolved, throwaways for a world where people leave their Benzes behind after they get where they're going. (Leland)

Renegade Soundwave "Biting My Nails" (Mute/Enigma) Another successful on the import charts, its looped beats and buzzing guitar proclaim it the ultimate club record. It's music with an attitude destined for dance glory. (Reinhardt)

Winter Hours *Winter Hours* (Chrysalis) If the Moody Blues were to move to New Jersey, phone up Julian Cope and say, "Fancy starting a new band? You can sing, but you must write songs about the glory of life," and he agreed, the band would sound like Winter Hours. Slight melancholy mingles with Lenny Kaye-produced sharp guitars that sometimes race with the vocals as if they were in a steepchase through the countryside. (Wright)

Wire *It's Beginning To And Back Again* (Mute/Enigma) Arty, lush, spinning guitars around the rhythms in dense waves, they're like today's Roxy Music. They make pleasure seem subversive, even when it isn't. (Levy)

FLASH

Edited by Christian L. Wright

Kicking the Ballistics

AK-47s in hand, talented and organized, N.W.A. are either America's worst nightmare or what the country will see when it wakes up.

o

Vernon Reid of Living Colour calls them a product of ghetto Darwinism, "survival of the fittest and the roughest and the cruellest." Police in Toledo, Ohio, refused to provide security at their concert: Cincinnati police cited them for disorderly conduct onstage the next day. MTV calls their video too violent to broadcast, even though it contains no acts of violence. They are former drug dealers turned savvy entrepreneurs, graduates of urban America's uncelebrated gangster superpuppie culture, putting out million-selling albums on their own label. Overshadowed by their controversy, they are making perhaps the most viscerally exciting music in America today.

They are N.W.A., from L.A.'s city of Compton, an attractive California community torn by gangs and drugs since the Watts riots. At last issue's hip hop roundtable, they were all anyone wanted to talk about. Graphic and often brutal, N.W.A. are either making millions by putting a seductive face on black-on-black crime, or creating the great urban literature of the late 80s. But I should let their main writer introduce himself.

Straight out of Compton, crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube From the gong called Niggers With Attitudes When I'm called off I got a sawed-off Squeeze the trigger and bodies get hauled off.

In conversation, Ice Cube, a self-confident 20-year-old from a stable, two-parent home, is friendly and polite (the dark secret of hip hop is that its performers are the most considerate and cooperative in pop music). "People are sick of hearing, 'Yo, I got a gold rope, I'm hard,' " he says. "They're sick of big words and how bad you are; they wanna bear the real deal, stuff they can relate to. They can't relate to being the best MC in the world. We do records that people are scared to do. We show kids what goes on in their neighborhood. Where we live, within a weekend, you can have nine people dead. Next weekend you have eight, the following weekend you have six. And Compton isn't all that big. I don't consider my writing negative; I consider it teaching. People want to know what's going on in Vietnam. That's what I call L.A. Vietnam."

At their best, on the song "— — — — the Police," they confront black American's relationship with the law with a frankness unprecedented in bellacious dance music:

Don't let it be a block and white one 'Cause they'll slow you down to the street top Block police showing off for the white cop.

"Our people been wanting to say, 'Fuck the police' for the longest time. If something happened in my neighborhood, the last people we'd call was the police. Our friends get killed; they never find the killer. 367 people were killed in gang activity in L.A. in 1988. Nothing was said about that. But when this Korean girl got killed in Westwood, a white neighborhood, now it's a gang problem. As long as the niggers was killing each other, there wasn't nothing said."

"They put this on rapers that you gotta have a message. Bullshit. They don't put that same burden on singers. After a guy sings about going to bed with this chick, he ain't gotta say, 'Yo, I wore a rubber.' I'm sick of it. My buddies was on the corner the other day selling crack. I drove up in my Jeep and said, 'Yo, y'all don't need to be out here. All you're gonna do is get arrested.' He told me, 'Everybody can't rap. You're living good, so you can say shit like that. If you wasn't making money, you'd be right out here with us.' I bought him a beer, and said, 'Thanks for setting me straight. Peace.' No, I didn't say peace, 'cause peace is a fictional word. Peace is a dream."

—John Leland





Far Voyagers

Psychedelic garage band or heirs to the Stooges' throne, Screaming Trees grow in a lush guitar garden.

Despite their trippy songs and double-entendre album title *Buzz Factory*, Screaming Trees don't advocate smoking anything. Guitarist/composer Gary Lee Conner says his style may be psychedelic but he doesn't use narcotics: "I think you can see things in a surrealist way and not be influenced by drugs." Singer/lyricist Mark Lanegan skirts the issue. "To me," he says, "everything seems weird anyway. I constantly feel fucked-up without drugs."

As every state has its Ellensburg—a small town in the middle of Washington—every Ellensburg has its Screaming Trees: a group of greasy longhairs who hang out in a black-lit basement from which strange smells, smokes and sounds emanate. But few closeted rockheads can make lush white noise like the Screaming Trees have sprouted on five albums: wailing vocal drone made melodic by refulgent guitar and rendered danceable by the thump of a mesmerized rhythm section.

Screaming Trees could have been just a great garage band. The quartet—two brothers and two high school friends—recorded their debut record, *Other Worlds*, without ever playing live; just before the LP came out, they played their first gig at a group home for the mentally impaired. "That's when we realized that people might like us," says drummer Mark Pickrel.

Live, Lanegan stands in the center of the stage, his

hair hanging over his face, and leans into the mike, scarcely moving, like a doped Joey Ramone. He's anchored from behind by Pickrel's lurching the hi-hat, and on both sides by the brothers Conner: Bassist Van the affable Tweedle Dee, and Gary Lee the dramatic Dum, whipping his hair around in a crazy figure eight, falling on his knees, slipping onto his back during the set's denouement and kicking his legs in the air.

At a club last winter in West Germany, the wah-wah wizard's show went even further. "I stupidly wore these old cords that night," says Gary. "On the last song, the whole crotch ripped out, and I don't wear underwear. It was the kind of place we couldn't go back stage before the encore, so I couldn't change. So I tucked my shirt into my pants and we went back but unfortunately my shirt didn't stay in too long. And let's just say the guitar was not strategically placed the whole time."

On *Buzz Factory*, Gary Lee's guitar is always strategically placed, whether it's boogieing Stooigishly or free-falling into a singable lead. Like their Washington State compatriots Soundgarden, Screaming Trees are an organic outgrowth of the late 60s/early 70s guitar mania. But unlike other dense West Coast groovers, they know how to play melodies.

—Evelyn McDonnell

Radio Graffiti

Kaplaiz lag, stormname Bonz Malone. My mission this month is to cold crash the disco, bum-rushin' doors from here to San Francisco. So get off my Nabisco, kid!

Once more I've been sent on a special assignment. My mission: to infiltrate the stereo zone of MC Hammer. Is he for real? His album, *Let's Get It Started*, has sold two million copies. Now he's building his own music empire, producing *Oaktown 3.5.7.* and *Ace Juice*, and claiming that "Oaktown is the new Motown."

But so what? In my opinion, his music is mediocre. He's mixing hip hop with R&B, making our music soft. Who the hell does he think he is, the Boss? We had enough of that Diana Ross crap. But as I jetted out to Cali, I gave him credit. His videos are dope. And even though we ain't gain for it in New York, from Pelang (the Bronx) to Mecca (Manhattan), Medina (Brooklyn) to the Desert (Queens), everybody says the boy can dance.

In the conference room of the Oakland Hyatt, I take off the kid gloves. "You ain't no rapper," I say. "You're selling out rap, making it frail like Dan Quayle." Hammer gets his name from hamsterin' Hank Aaron, so he doesn't flinch in the punch. He takes my slap and comes back with a jammy. "Bonz," he says, "styles change with the times. I met with Heavy D, and he said only we know what hazz to be done!"

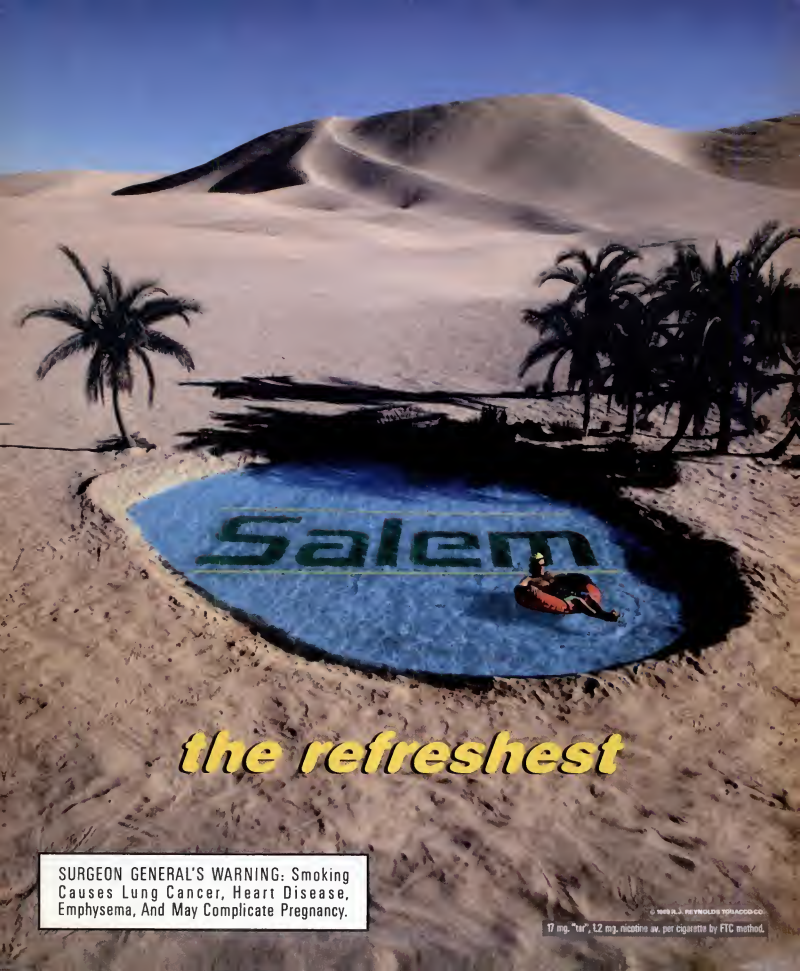
I ain't with that BS. Heavy D. & The Boyz made a dance record, "We Got Our Own Thing," but Heavy D. is large. "We ain't buying your record in New York, Jack, cuz we know where real hip hop come from. Two turntables, a mike and an echo chamber, throwing night jams the park. You ain't up on that. And the people buying your records ain't up on it, either. I know you want there, cuz I ain't seen you there!" I hand it to Hammer: he can't rap, but he can take a punch. "I give the people what they want," he says, still on his feet. "They demand more than some guy grabbing his penis. That's what's killing rap, not me adding R&B, I'm broadening rap. People want dancing, they want choreography." I rap him in his pride one last time for good measure, and call it a drop.

That night, at Hammett's club in Santa Clara, Hammer rolls up in blue Benz with a skirt kit and a vinyl plate, and houses the place like third base. People watch in amazement, chanting "Hammer! Hammer!" as he does the Hamburglar. He owns the place. I stroll in on my Bollys and do the Bonedance. It's a showdown at the hoodwax, as the Oaktown meets the uptown. I get my share, but he has the trecks locked.

In the end, I have to hand it to Hammer, with a special shout to 3.5.7. I still don't like his music, but I like his style. So I'll close this Dear John letter. Just in case, dismissed!

Mission accomplished

—Bonz Malone



the refreshest

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Ska was born in Jamaica in the late 1950s. Predating reggae, the off-rhythms and heavy horn section of ska spread quickly throughout the West Indies, found a supportive, razor-edged audience in Britain's punk movement, then went out of style. It's rising up again—out of crap bars and into festivals—on both sides of the Atlantic.



Maroon Town

LONDON—Record companies here are desperately searching for something to replace Acid House and the "Summer of Love." While London clublife thrived, ska bands kept building a separate, self-sufficient live scene; and as clublife continues to wane, a house/ska hybrid has emerged. The birth of skacid—a acid ska music—is imminent. But while many other groups jump on the pseudo-revival bandwagon, Maroon Town sets itself apart.

"We believe in respecting the roots of the music," says Deaun German, Maroon Town's guitarist and cofounder. "Ska came out of an incredible situation, from a small part of Kingston when times were really tough." German and his childhood friend, bassist Rajan Datar, formed Maroon Town about three years ago, collecting the now eight-member group through advertisements, friends of friends, parties and accidents (they met their drummer on the tube). The name comes from Maroon City, the autonomous



NEW YORK—"Ska isn't the kind of music you listen to late at night when you're in a reflective mood," says The Toasters' English frontman Rob Hingley over the laughter of the band's eight other members. Like a bear quieting a small tribe of pow-wow Apaches, he leans forward, trying to define the band he started—under the guidance of Joe Jackson—six years ago after moving to New York.

"Ska is definitely good-time music," says Hingley. "People come to see our shows to help them get rid of all the inhibitions they build up in everyday life. But it's important to see that, aside from just having a great time and bursting out all over the place, the music is really working-class inspired and addresses real social issues like racism and unemployment and, with our band, the nihilism and bullshit of kids getting into drugs."

"Ska took on a real inner-city flavor," says bassist Greg Grinnell. "What we're playing now is really more of a hybrid of the original ska. Our music has a big pop influence as well as blending rap, calypso, R&B. In England what they're doing is probably more conservative, sticking to the original concept. But we're more eclectic. It's what's happening to us as individuals, not something we consciously planned."

Indeed, the NYC-based nine-man-pack consists of three different nationalities, several races and varying musical histories. On their latest LP *Thrill Me Up*—produced by Joe Jackson for Skatoid Records—the Toasters break down international barriers. With sincerely languid and suddenly frenzied songs like "Haitian Frustration" and "Frankenska," that is a one-for-all community.

"If you're looking at our band onstage, you're looking at a whole bunch of different people with different racial backgrounds, different influences, different worlds," says drummer Jonathon McCain, twirling a black parkie hat on his finger. "You put a child in front of the Toasters, you teach them it's O.K. to be with other races—it's a unity type thing."

Keyboardist Steve Hex suddenly breaks his quiet demeanor. "A lot of kids out there get their ideas and their politics from pop culture. Since some of our fans are younger, we try to give them something really positive to pick up on. So many of the bands that the industry has picked up are these guys with big drug problems. You can't let these guys become role models for kids."

"Yeah! Right, right!" The whole band stands, mocking themselves as heroic captains in the fight for all that is good. "We're gonna change the world!"

"Seriously," Hingley says in a paternal tone. "I'm really fed up with all the anarchy and the sense that nothing is worth living for. The whole thing is that life is for fun and life is a party and you can just do it. That's what ska music is—just like having a good time no matter."

"Even though the circumstances of your life may be adverse, you can still turn that to your advantage. I mean, a lot of our songs are about what a lousy time we're having, but at the same time that's kind of amusing. If you can turn it around—vicissitudes of life can be used to your advantage."

—Jennifer Houlton



—Susan Buttenwieser

**"He works as hard as he plays.
And he drinks Johnnie Walker."**



Good taste is always an asset.



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Africa Fête



Paris has been called the capital of African music for most of this decade. We are now approaching the next step. The capital of African music is beginning to export it. The African musicians want to meet the world. Salif Keita is on his way, via London.

"World Music can mean music that reaches everybody in the universe," says Salif Keita who is—with Hugh Masekela and Roy Loma—one of Africa's richest voices. "You envelope all the cultures in one music or it can be a collection of cells and atoms and each little piece is a part of World Music. I am very happy if my music is just one more component in the sauce."

Modern African World Music is to the 80s what reggae was to the 70s—the most interesting and influential popular music of its time. And both are Third World exports. But Africa's multicultural diversification has more potential than the charming, simple reggae. Reggae never succeeded in reaching the masses in the United States. American marketing ended up with egg on its face, and they're not about to let that happen again. African music is too varied, intricate and attractive to get stuck by the side of a blue highway. Already, many major record companies have World Music divisions aimed at finding the next rock superstar, who—a lot of people agree—may well be African.

Salif Keita is an albino from Mali who comes from a royal family that has been renowned for their music for centuries. Being of noble descent does not necessarily mean growing up rich in Mali, and Keita had more hangers than clean shirts. He was the first Keita to go "rock," which caused family problems. But he's making some of the most accessible, meaningful and haunting music to come out of Africa. Keita's latest album, *Ko-Yan* (Mango/Island) is spiritual, gently dealing with family values and religion (he is Muslim) while his voice provokes chills. *Ko-Yan* means "What's going on" in Bambara, his native language; but Keita says he's never heard of the Marvin Gaye song. A mystery no one can explain is that he is more successful in London than in Paris, long considered the capital of African music.

"African music is beginning to arrive in London," he says. "Music has been too manufactured. People like African music because it is very old and very complicated in an organic way. The world has heard too much simplicity and simple-mindedness. They want to be interested."

"I am never far away from tradition. I compare, for example, the nobility of today with the past. I speak a lot about God. Music is a vaccine, it goes through the veins. Music is like God going through our body."

"There is a lot more in common than you may think between African and European music. All you do is add a 'x' change, there, take off an 'n' here and add a 'k'ing' somewhere in the middle. The extensions change but the center remains the same."

"My feeling is that music is like a baby; that as it grows you must keep its personality intact. It gets bigger and keeps the same genes. It takes a little bit from everywhere but has its own personality. It is not a copy."

—Mike Zwerin

The death of Pete Dinklage, drummer for Echo and the Bunnymen is the most tragic news of the year. De Freitas, 27, was killed when he crashed his motorcycle on the way from London to Liverpool to rehearse with the Ian McCulloch-less Bunnymen. De Freitas will be greatly missed.

Back from creative death is Bob Dylan, whose London show was described by many critics as his best in a decade. Rather less fortunate was Lou Reed who, despite a well-received LP and a series of sell-out gigs, found himself hampered by both a crowd demanding old hits and a haircut demanding a pair of scissors. The Velvet Underground are out, for the month at least.

In a matter of days, all five Pet Shop Boys dates sold out. It's their first tour ever but will only hit Birmingham, Glasgow and London (for three shows). All concerts will be accompanied by a 45-minute Derek Jarman film of the Boys as a back drop, a troupe of dancers and Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe abandoning tailored suits in favor of heavy fetish—rubber tops and gloves. Not known for live prowess, the Pet Shop Boys in Concert is as much a curiosity as event-of-the-year.

Club culture is splitting with the West End clubs dominated by Deep House, Swingbeat, Techno and jazz, while Acid has gone very publicly underground. The best Acid nights require trips to secret locations in the countryside and most last until noon the next

day. One night—organized by a group called Sunrise—attracted 11,000 people to an aircraft hanger; two hours' drive from London. The Sun informed its readers that the dance floor was covered with dead pigeons, the result of drug-crashed teenagers. Hard to believe, though, if everyone had indeed been on

liberally doused in peroxide, were started at the recent Electric Ballroom show by an impromptu third-support appearance by The Primitives. Even more surprising than Birdland's Jesus and Mary Chain-like power chords was the fact that Primitives' singer Tracy has given up dying her hair blonde.

LONDON FAXING

» Bulletin From The Land Of Bad Teeth And Excellent Shoes «

Ecstasy, they might have tried to make passes at the pigeons and then bored them to death with love-vibes. All misinformation aside, The Sunrise bash has been spoken of as the Acid House Woodstock.

The Primitives seem very fond of secret gigs, no doubt inspired by critical distaste. Their Blonde Icon status has been severely denied by bands such as The Darling Buds, Transvision Vamp and—best of all—Birdland. Fans of the last, a pretty-boy foursome

The Queen is Dead.

More started fans were at swish London nightierie, Browns, following a week of sell out Wembley Arena gigs by Bobby Brown. Bobby's post-performance celebration, attended by innumerable celebrities, including Bono and Tears for Fears' Kurt, turned decidedly bedonkian when Bobby turned up with Prince singer Cat. The two spent most of the night necking furiously before indulging in a slow dance so raunchy that the management

considered throwing a bucket of water over them.

London's latest fashion trend: flares and tropical grub. Wrangler has just embarked on a major campaign to retrench flared jeans in this country, no doubt inspired by the sexual, retrogressive dullness of the capital's clubbers. Even American Classics in the Kings Road, long time purveyors of 501s and leather jackets, have turned one of their shops over to selling surfwear. London is not noted for its great surf beaches, but wannabe Hawaiians and hardcore skaters are snapping up most of its stock. Hot labels are Mambo, Body Glove, Krakatoa and Stussy.

Even more retro, but rather more appealing, is the BBC's decision to screen "The Honeycombers," some 30 years after its inception. Londoners are beginning to stay in Friday nights just to catch the show, which is being aired here for the first time ever.

We got Gleason, and you are going to get Julia Burchill. The one-time enfant terrible of rock Journalism has just written a novel called *Amuletism*, loosely based on her current working world of Fleet Street Journalism. A cut above the usual shopping and fucking genre, it nevertheless packs in enough grotesque sex scenes to ensure worldwide success. The Aaron Spelling mini-series can't be long in coming.

—Paul Mothar

Wise Up, Suckers

The reason everyone hates Pop Will Eat Itself is because everyone wants to be Pop Will Eat Itself. Self-loathing masters of excess, they make all your randy dreams of aggression come true.

Pop Will Eat Itself are the most hated band in England. It's not because they're vulgar, sexist, abominous swine, and not because, in the world of dihard rap fans, they're basically considered, well, a satire. It is because the Poppies, as they're so affectionately called, have risen above the insults, the flogging from the British press—even converting a cynical London literary critic who likes Brian Eno to a PWEI believer—to emerge (with a little help from the *New Musical Express*) as England's true



bad boy pop princes.

"We're probably the most hated band by journalists because the *NME* loves us," says singer Clint Mansell, speaking in the rough but lyrical Midlands dialect. "The

other papers are desperate to find some ground of their own so they hate the bands that the *NME* likes. Basically, they're just wrapped up in their own insecurities over the fact that they don't write for the *NME*."

Born out of the mid-80s glam band from Eden—which included drinking buddies Miles and Maic of The Wonder Stuff—the Squirbridge quartet released their first LP, *Box Frenzy*, in 1987. Then came the obvious, though debatable comparisons to the Beastie Boys, an invitation to play a Soviet festival and a European tour with Public Enemy and Run-DMC. Unfortunately, Pop Will Eat Itself was thrown off after four dates because when they asked "Can you dig it?" the b-boys said "No."

"That was a pretty volatile period," says Clint. "We genuinely feared for our lives. The thing was, somebody was going to get hurt because we were getting so much stuff thrown at us. So it was decided among all concerned that it would be best if we didn't do anymore gigs with them and we came home."

Now on a major label, the Poppies have released their second LP, *This Is The Day, This Is The Hour*. This is it. This is using a format echoing their favorites, Public Enemy, and

sampling (stealing, as they call it) from everything—even British TV ads and movies to James Brown, Tears For Fears and "Funtown"—they've assembled a hippy hoppy rap, thrash, pop adventure.

"We definitely like the format of Public Enemy's album in the fact that it all runs together," says Clint. "It doesn't really stop. Some tracks are intermingles and things like that. Our songs '16 Different Flavours of Hell' and 'PWEI Is A Four Letter Word' are sort of short, cut up things. That's something we look from Public Enemy because we really like that."

"Sampling is just something we're into really. We were described as being a piece of blotting paper because we soak so many things up. I suppose that's what we do. We're open to a lot of influences and music is changing all the time. We'd rather change with it than be stuck like some kind of dinosaur. As far as I'm concerned, this album is brilliant and the whole world should own a copy." Pop Will Eat Itself are the most hated band in England—but for all the right reasons.

—Robin Reinhardt

How Deep Do The Roots Grow?

Clint Black, the newest golden-throat of country music, borrows his influences from people who borrowed theirs. What goes around comes around, they say. But when it gets here, it sounds a lot better for its travels.

"I was just coming out of my teens when George Strait hit the scene," says Clint Black. "Let me make him sound old."

Black's statement, more than just candles on a birthday cake, is a summary of the quasi-revolution that's rocked country music this decade. The tradition from which the so-called "new traditionalists" drew is not necessarily the roots of country music; already the effect of those upstarts who forged the Nashville glasnost only a few years ago is being felt.

"If I write a song with a bluegrass appeal," says Black, who has written nine songs in almost as many styles on his debut album *Killin' Time*, "I may be sounding like Ricky Skaggs. See, that's what my exposure to bluegrass. I didn't grow up with that, my exposure is from people who were exposed to that."

"I grew up with Texas radio," says the 27-year-old Houston native. "I was exposed to a more finely polished style of Texas music, not the early stuff. The further it gets passed along, the more polished it becomes."



Recognizing his place in line has made Black a better songwriter with no cowboy pretense. Consequently, his material is as fresh as his twist on break-up songs: in "A Better Man" he looks back at how he's grown during the time spent with his freshly ex'd. And "Winding Down" draws from his days in shol'n'a beer joints, recognizing that the crowd is counting on him to send them home happy: "You got to leave them up," he sings, "so they'll go home feeling right."

"Pop and rock have a wide variety of styles to choose from," says Black. "And country is now starting to be as diverse as rock." Back in his formative happy hours, Black used to end his set with one of two "rip roaring songs": "Honky Tonk Heroes" or "Turn The Page." The latter is a Detroit rocker by Bob Seger; the former is "a Waylon Jennings album,"

Black doesn't foresee the growth of traditionally influenced country music killing country pop. "Traditional country music has taken the front seat now, but it won't always be that way. The public has to realize that they may or may not like 50 percent of country radio, but there's going to be something for everybody. It's like the world is; you may not like everything, but if you can find enough that you do like, you'll get behind that."

—Robert Gordon

FLASH

the COLD-ROCK stuff

Those obscure objects of obsessive devotion

Sideburns

Long and dumb, like Rob Lowe's penis but not as useful, they're the only male facial hair that doesn't look like it belongs on female pudento. Lobe-length and neatly trimmed, they deliver their message with stylish tonsorial eclect: This is where the face ends, they say, and the ears begin. They're back.



Chanel Earrings

The simple jewels—hoops or gold-encircled faux pearls—adorn a lady whose subtle style needs no announcement. The only *objet de Chanel*, apart from the lipsticks and wool-crepe suits worn by Ines, that doesn't blaspheme Coco's memory. If she were to see you in the street wearing a plain white T-shirt, men's pajama pants and a pair of those timeless earrings, she'd say: "Ah, I am still alive."



George Wayne's R.O.M.E. Magazine

High comp meets high genius. You get the big dish on the stars, the affluent and the world you don't inhabit: invented words like "extand" that means tired and overrated, make-believe film ads for "Blood Rain" starring Michael Douglas, clever captions for a page full of beautiful men, a 1989 In-Out pull-out mini-mag with the Pit Shop Boys ("In, in, still") on the cover, and Wayne's amazing interviews (the one with Tim Euston, Ralph Lauren's coveted model, is especially tasty). A steal at \$4 a pop—if you're hep enough to find it.



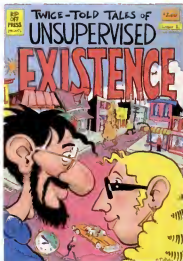
Yo! MTV Raps

Its instant success (after a month it was the most popular program on the network) proves what believers knew all along—that hip hop waxes the competition like a can of Mop'n Shine, and that more MTV hosts should be as cool as Fob 5 Freddy. With "Hey Vern, It's Ernest" leaving the airwaves in September, and Public Enemy's Chuck D saying, "The single is over, we're putting our energies into elevating video," this program should own Saturday morning—and the rest of the week as well.



Twice-Told Tales Of Unsupervised Existence

In Terry LaBan's stories people do just what you and I do: work shitty jobs, worry, grieve at their lovers, worry, have tense family brunches with parents that should fuck off and die, worry and occasionally get their hardcore band a gig at the school talent show (only to be shown up by a 1/2 cover band). The constant discovery of adventure in the ruins of boredom, as much as the sketchy drawings and dead-on characterizations, make this one of the best comic books in America. (Published by Rip Off Press)





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BOMB THE BASS



With degrees in
anthropology and biology, a
guitar and a drum, and some
pretty weighty lyrics, House of
Freaks prove that two guys
can do a lot.

House of Freaks write songs about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, mutilating mockingbirds, Stonewall Jackson, having sex on an altar, hellhounds, graveyards, hines, racist beatings, plantation mansions, Robert Oppenheimer and, on their second LP *Tontillo*, how the same moon shines down on every man.

House of Freaks is a pop band. Muddy Waters was a pop band, too. "A lot of kids bands forget that the Beatles copied heavily from the blues," says singer/guitarist Bryan Harvey. "There was a real raw quality to their sound, a hard edge. We're definitely influenced by the Beatles, but we also love the guys they did—Chuck Berry, Slim Harpo, Bo Diddley and the rest."

"We really identify with rural blues, the front porch stuff," says percussionist Johnny Hott. "Because they had to make do with what they had. If they didn't have a guitar they'd take the wire off a broom, wrap it around a nail and stretch it over a wooden box. Guys would be beating on lighter fluid cans, whatever it took to make the music." Hott's been known to hang on anything from a 50-gallon drum to a bald friend's head.

In this era of The Quirky Duo (Mejo and Skid, They Might Be Giants, Timbuk 3), House of Freaks is remarkable because they sound like a full band—without the assist of a jambox. They're decidedly unquicky and only freaks in that they are the missing link between the Beatles and the Buzzcocks. Though they dub the bass parts and a second guitar on their albums, House of Freaks take the stage with only two players. And they pull it off.

"You've never gone and seen two guys playing an accordion and washboard and said, 'Man, they need a bass player,'" says Harvey. "Music is what you make of it. Two guys can do a lot."

Though Harvey and Hott both attended Virginia Commonwealth University (Harvey got a degree in anthropology, Hott one in biology), they didn't meet until years after graduating. Harvey's then-girlfriend introduced him to her ex-boyfriend Hott. Not the ideal circumstance in which to start a friendship, but Harvey and Hott sort of hit it off. "We had one major thing in common. That girl had a boyfriend right after me and right before Bryan and we both hated him," says Hott. They also shared an affinity for country music.

The band's debut, *Monkey On a Chain Gong*, was released to raves in '88. Then came the inevitable comparisons. Though they were amused by the Lynyrd Skynyrd and U2 tags, Harvey was a little miffed when one critic compared House of Freaks to the Smiths: "I fuckin' hate the Smiths!"

After a lot of thought on the matter, Hott thinks he's got his band pegged. "I don't know if anyone's ever written it, but I think we sound like Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Without Emerson."

—Michael Carraon

Introducing Mr. Frank Sidebottom

Singer, songwriter, actor, comedian, magician, ventriloquist, dancer, adventurer, male model and—simply—talker of common sense, Frank Sidebottom is the most fantastic show business star to ever come out of Britain. He is—sidebottom himself might say—quite brilliant, actually.

Frank, who comes from Timperley, Cheshire ("six feet from Manchester, which means I can walk there without having to get the bus"), is the Pee-wee Herman of Britain; his behavior is juvenile while his humor's quite adult. He's hosted children's TV programs, has his own weekly radio show, and draws cartoons for the *OINK!* comic. He decided to pursue a show biz career after seeing Abba on "Top Of The Pops."

"I was watching television," says Frank. "Have you seen it? It's like a box with TV pictures on it. Anyway, I saw Abba singing and I thought, 'Blimey, that's a doddle. I could do that.' So I decided that's what I'll do—I'll do show business. Me mum wants me to be a bank clerk. I've got the suit, but it's the outdoor life for me. So I wrote to record companies, asking them could I please make a record and be on 'Top Of The Pops' and be a show biz star, and please could they send me some pamphlets. But I got no replies at all."

Undeterred, Frank decided to make himself a household name,

*Abba was his
inspiration.
Papier mâché is
his medium.
Boundless is
his talent.*

afraid that his mum might discover the son she believes has been unemployed for 20 years is really an ace recording star, with two albums and half a dozen EPs, including tributes to McCartney, Queen and Kylie Minogue.

At the end of each song, the ever-polite Mr. Sidebottom says, "thank you." And he's the only pop star who performs with a puppet pal, Little Frank. But they have a strained relationship, "because Little Frank is only cardboard and sometimes he's more famous than me. And that's not right, is it?" Little Frank's hand—the Demon Axx Warriors From Oblivion—supports Big Frank on UK tours, although their mentor dismisses them as "hohhins, actual-



emerging from his garden shed with Frank's Firm Favorites, an EP of covers—like "Anarchy In The UK," "Every Breath You Take" and "Bebemian Rhapsody"—sung in a winsome nasal whine, backed by a banjo. On EMI, the same record company as his absolute idols Paul McCartney and Freddie Mercury. Frank's first effort didn't get him on "Top Of The Pops." But he's anxious to point out, "It wasn't because I'm not very good. It's more because I didn't want to go on in case me mum sees me because she said I know I'm in show business." Frank is

ly. They only do one song."

Frank Sidebottom may be a big pop star in more ways than one—his head, for example—but he's never gone in for naughty pop star behavior, like taking drugs, although his mum did buy him a bottle of cough linctus once when he had a cold. Always neat—his hair nicely combed and wearing his pink tie ("It's the only time I get recognized because it's me trademark")—Frank Sidebottom is a brilliant role model for every youngster hoping to break into that fantastic industry—show business. He really is. Thank you.

—Jane Garcia



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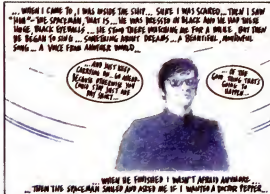
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VISIONS OF ROY by Dean Rohrer



If video killed the radio star, why is Joe Frank alive?

Say you're driving down the road one existential night, or even better, you're lying on your back, alone in a big dark room around midnight, listening to the radio. There's the sound of water in a tub, and a man and woman talking. Water splashes as she begins to wash his back, and the man quietly asks, "What makes you sad?"

Or you're in an auditorium packed with young scenesters from the literary, music and performance worlds. The lights go down and a middle-aged man with penetrating eyes walks out onstage wearing a sweatshirt and holding a microphone. "I'm an insomniac," he begins. The audience chuckles. He then describes how one night he phoned an escort service to request "a slim graduate student, her hair in a bun, wearing glasses, her smoldering sexuality overlaid by a deep knowledge of Heidegger. Her left buttock should have tattooed on it a verse from the Koran—failing that, an obscure poem by Joyce Kilmer. . . ."

Joe Frank makes his living as a purveyor of angst-ridden introspection. "Work In Progress," his weekly one-hour broadcast produced of Santa Monica, California's KCRW and aired nationally on National Public Radio, is a journey through a surreal landscape of words, sounds and ideas. Combining spoken text with music, audio effects and improvisations of a group of New York actors with whom Frank has long

been associated, an episode might take the form of a dramatic monologue, diatribe, talk show, audio documentary, or hallucinatory travelogue. It might be an impassioned and clumsy ode to "woman" that detours into an unnerving portrait of misogyny, a discussion of domestic terrorism, or a simple story of friends who come to the rescue, lovers who drift apart, and family members who die.

This summer Frank took his "Work In Progress" into a new medium, performing live to packed houses (the run was extended twice) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA. Drawing from his radio programs, Frank stalked the stage holding his microphone like a totem, delivering deadpan tirades as he stored the audience down, laid back on an analyst's couch and told stories about the rain, his childhood, and the nature of desire. A collection of his stories will be published this winter by William Morrow and Co.

"Humor is a way of deflecting terror," Frank has said. If so, then Joe Frank is an invulnerable warrior who stands in defense of our fears, our vanities and our forever-eroding sense of ourselves. He transforms the everyday banality of the human comedy into an inspired weirdness that feeds on pathos and irony, and feels a lot like revelation. Sartre would have called it *nausea*; Frank makes it art.

—David Carpenter

Z. CAVARICCI

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TALKING ALL THAT



The Dish, The Dirt, The Inside Dope Sussed by Danny Fields



Ian McCulloch: alone in the briar patch.

Reid, Vivian Campbell, Paul Barenre, Bernie Worrall, Nicky Hopkins and Ginger Baker. Jeff Beck's first album in five years, *Guitar Shop*, is expected before the cold weather sets in. Texas Hotel's *Pot Dog Pondering* has signed with Columbia after being courted by nearly all the majors.

• **The Commotions**, of course, are history. So *Lloyd Cole goes it alone*, with Fred Maher (producer of Lou Reed's *New York*) producing Cole's solo LP *Downtown*. It's expected out by Columbus Day. • **Dennis Herring** has produced Camper Van Beethoven's second album (on Virgin), the name of which has been changed from the East European/Tropical sounding *The Humid Press of Days* to the simply tropical *Key Lime Pie*. They have a new member: 21-year-old female violinist Morgan Fletcher, formerly of the *Harm Farm*. • **What's That Noise?** is the first album from Cold Cut, deejay/producer team of Johnathon Moore and Matt Black noted for innovative sampling, and the fact that they have no vocals, since no singer can handle the breadth of their output. • **"Steel Wheels"** is the title of the first single from the Rolling Stones' forthcoming album, recorded in Montserrat and mixed in June at Olympic Studios in London; 17 tracks were recorded, 14 of which made it to London. Only Jagger Richards songs, no covers, are on the album.

• **Midnight Oil** is in a Sydney studio with Diesel and Dust producer Wayne Liversy and engineer Dave Nicholas, who did INXS's *KICK*. "We've got enough material for a double album," says drummer Rob Hirst. Expect a November release. • **La Vert** has a Split!e, e, 800 number, and a public service announcement, "Just Schoolin'." And Kael Moe Dee does a Sunbelt commercial. • **Yngwie Malmsteen's** *Live in Russia* set, with Joe Lynn Turner on vocals, will be out at the end of September on PolyGram. Another important release on the label will be Dan Beitz's *Storm*, produced in New York by Nile Rodgers. Tour to finish the album release. • **Liza Minnelli** and *The Pet Shop Boys* are one of the more interesting pairings of the season, soon to result in an album of all PSB originals, except for covers of Steven Sondheim's "Losing My Mind," Yvonne Elliman's "Love Pains," and Tanita Tikaram's "Twist in My Sobriety." • **Michael Hutchence** has been working with Otis Olsen, an Australian underground hero who did the soundtrack for "Dogs in Space" (which Hutchence starred in. In a band called Max Q. Olsen writes the lyrics and is the principle singer. Hutchence will also star as percol Peety Shelley in the Roger Corman film "Frankenstein Unbound." It'll be filmed in Italy and star John Hurt, Raul Julia and Bridget Fonda. Meanwhile INXS keyboardist Andrew Farris has produced singer/songwriter Jenny Morris (backing vocals on the "Listen Like Thieves" tour). Her LP is *Lifted Shiver* and should be out by year's end. Farris got married to Shelley Banks in April. • **The Hummingbirds** from Sydney will release *Love Buzz* soon. Mitch Easter flew to Australia to produce and it was mixed in the States by Easter and lead singer Simon Holmes. • **Hut's**, Austin's favorite restaurant on West 6th Street, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Originally opened by Homer Hutson and his wife as a greasy spoon in 1939, Hut's has become a hotbed for locals and local celebs—musicians (like Tex Thomas and the Dangling Ringers every Sunday), politicians, athletes—because of its good food and better 50s-style decor. • **Bazo the Clown** (Larry Harman Pictures Inc.) is suing *Tao Much Joy* for sampling his voice in their song "Clowns" on the Son of Sam I Am LP. Singer Tim Quirk reportedly looks forward to seeing the clown in court. • **Paul Kelly** is soon to release *So Much Water So Close to Home*. The album title comes from a Raymond Carver story which is also the basis for Kelly's song "Everything's Turning to Stone." • **Ricki Lee Jones** releases *Flying Cowboys*, produced by Walter Becker of Steely Dan, this month. • **Twenty years** from now, Run of Run-DMC says he'll be "preaching the good word of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." • **NRBQ** has been signed to Virgin. • **Mark Knopfler** has done the soundtrack for "Last Exit to Brooklyn." LP version forthcoming on Warner. • **Tone Loe** was arrested in Miami for doing the wild thing. He thought the beach was private but it wasn't. He was taken to jail, where he signed a lot of autographs, and was quickly released on his own recognizance.

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The Secret Life of Girls

Once, Exposé were the voices of desire and promise that lay across Latin hip hop's finest electro-beats. Now they're growing up.

Article by Frank Owen

The last time I interviewed Exposé we spent an agreeable 60 minutes swapping hair tips. This time Gioia Bruno showed me pictures of her new baby while Ann Curless and Jeanette Jurado talked about their newly-released second album, *What You Don't Know*: "It's a more mature album, more R&B oriented. We use real instruments—drums, horns and strings. Exposé are no longer a track act." Exposé are growing up, leaving behind the teen angel passions of their brilliant debut singles, meandering down that creative cul-de-sac called artistic credibility, and thinking, perhaps, about producing the first Miami-disco-lite concept album.

Making dance music is like doing cultural studies at the University of Oklahoma when you really want to study law at Harvard. Who wants to be a disco king or queen? No one. Instead, Chicago house visionary Marshall Jefferson wants to be Yes, Derek May wants to be a Detroit techno Phillip Glass, and queen of the post-mod dance floor Joyce Sims wants to be Anita Baker.

It's an understandable frustration. Exposé's airbrushed ordinariness has never gotten them respect from the rock crit establishment, and they fit uneasily within rock'n'roll's romantic elevation of charismatic freaks to the status of biblical prophets. And anyway, Exposé aren't even a real band, say some, but merely cute puppets controlled by svengali-cum-producer Lewis Martinée.

The three women who sit in front of me today are not the same group that scored a number one dance hit with "Point of No Return" in 1985. At the urging of Arista, Martinée and his Pontera Productions replaced the trio that sang on that single with Ann (who had vaguely heard of Exposé), Jeanette (who had never heard of them), and Gioia. The three girls had never met before Martinée put them together. It was a cynical move designed to enhance Exposé's crossover potential, but irony of ironies, the new Exposé were a thousand times better than the original. They rerecorded "Point of No Return" and it went to number five on the pop charts in '87. They followed their initial success with two more Latin-tinged dance classics—"Come Go With Me" and "Let Me Be the One." "The fact that we weren't the original Exposé has been a big stigma in our career," says Ann. "But the group had no identity until we came along. No matter what anybody says, Exposé aren't a female version of Menudo. Other dance producers dictate what their artists can do in the studio but Lewis, man, he just lets us get so artistic in there."

While they seem more than happy to work with Martinée at the moment, the reason Exposé give for the delayed release of their much awaited second album—the arrival of Gioia's baby—is disingenuous. Last fall, Jeanette Jurado filed suit against Martinée and Pontera Productions for fraud and negligent management, and word circulated that Arista would try and buy the name Exposé from Pontera. In the meantime, according to industry sources, Martinée went ahead and recorded the album without the women, intending to create Exposé 3 if the suit wasn't settled amicably. It was, and *What You Don't Know*, a record compromised by both Exposé's and Martinée's determination to recreate their last single, the ballad "Seasons Change," is the result.

"Seasons Change" brought in an older audience," says Ann. "Now that we've got them we don't want to lose that audience."

Feeling betrayed by Exposé's new adult-orientated direction, I take some consolation in the single "What You Don't Know," which should be retitled "What Boys Don't Know About Pop Could Fill Volumes." The video features three frat boys lounging around, engrossed in baseball talk, ignoring their girlfriends (played by Exposé). Bored, the three girls slip away and transform themselves into Exposé, multi-million selling music industry queens who perform an impromptu concert for thousands of adoring fans. The concert over, Exposé return to their everyday identities and rejoice the boys, who haven't even noticed the girls' absence. Such is the secret life of girls.

As pop critics Fred and Judy Vermorel once said: "Young girls are the secret agents of pop modernity." Young girls are pop's most advanced consumers, its vanguard, its market leaders, the true touchstone of what pop is really about. At one time I presumed Exposé understood this. These days I'm not so sure.





RAZING



ARIZONA



Earth First's Last Roundup

Mike Tait sat hunched over the wheel of his blue-and-silver Chevy pickup, tense from months of preparation. Heaving a sigh, he stared out from under his baseball cap, across the truck's sun-cracked hood and the high Sonoran desert. There was little out there except the lights of the nearby stores and gas stations of Wenden, Arizona. He tried to ignore the stifling heat, tracing the shadow of the high-tension power lines overhead, strung across the shoulders of giant steel columns that stretched toward the horizon.

Mark Davis sat squeezed in next to Tait, his sharp blue eyes all but lost behind an unruly mass of blonde hair and beard. He was glad the sun was finally down, and felt an energy rise within him as he twisted a propane torch regulator in his thick fingers. Like Tait, his thoughts were also on the power lines above. They ran the Bouse and Little Harquahala Pumping Stations of the Central Arizona Project, pulling water from the Colorado River to supply the desert cities and irrigate the nearby farms. Davis, a claustrophobe, tried to relax by concentrating on this complicated reworking of nature that scarred the desert, and how they were about to shut the whole thing down. But it was small relief inside the tiny cab.

"Quit fidgeting with that torch, Mark," Peg Millett complained, crammed in next to him on the cloth-covered seat. She picked at the duct tape wrapped around her hiking boots.

"You scared?" Mark asked.

"Yep."

"We don't have to do it," said Tait. "Not tonight, anyways."

"Yes we do," snapped Mark Davis, his eyes blazing.

They sat silent for a few moments while darkness fell like a weightless stone. Sharp. Absolute.

"What about you, Baker?" Tait went on, staring at the saguaro cactus at his elbow, but directing the question to a gaunt, shy-eyed man crumpled against the passenger door.

"Let's do it or let's not do it," 37-year-old Marc Baker mumbled. "But let's get out of this fucking truck."

Everyone was tense. Davis was a careful planner, but some of the group suspected that they'd been under surveillance. Otherwise it was airtight. They had been working on this for months—right down to bringing a demolition expert along. Mike Tait learned about explosives in Vietnam, and he must have

SuperStock

Article by Dean Kuipers



Earth First! cofounder Duve Foreman (left) discusses strategy with mysterious newcomer "Mike Tolt."

learned it well if someone as careful as Davis let him into their circle. Peg Millet had even tested him out on some smaller maneuvers. And now it was time.

They piled out, looking up at the night sky. Davis produced the pieces of the propane torch: torch-head with hoses, regulator, oxygen and propane tanks. They split up the equipment and, without a word, picked their way under the starlight, up Lake Alamo Road and a half-mile across the open desert.

At the base of the nearest electrical tower, Tolt loped off into the darkness, cowboy boots crunching on the rocks. Millet went the other way. And Baker watched as 39-year-old Mark Davis assembled the torch, then held it to the galvanized steel of the tower's first leg. Because this tower marked a curve in the power lines, once the legs were cut, the tension of cables would pull the whole run down.

The leg was burned halfway through, wet spuffs of white-hot metal raining onto the concrete, when a signal flare suddenly lit the sky. Cables exploded around them.

When Arizona author Edward Abbey published *The Monkeywrench Gang* in 1975, it was an immediate cult classic—a road map for environmental guerrillas. The novel tells of an unlikely alliance between four desert wilderness lovers who wage a war of homespun sabotage against mineral exploitation and development. The main characters are a "black Mormon" named Seldom Seen Smith, an angry surgeon named Dr. Sarvis (who funds their costly operations), his gorgeous Bronx-bom nurse, Bonnie Abzug, and a neanderthal Vietnam veteran named George Washington Hayduke, who made it all hap-

pen. "Monkeywrenching," as they called their sabotage, predated Abbey by a hundred years in the West, but today bumper stickers and T-shirts are everywhere with the message: "Hayduke Lives!"

In April 1980, Dave Foreman and four other radical environmentalists took a hiking trip in the Pinacate Desert. They had all read about Hayduke and the Monkeywrench Gang, so as they sat in a dark, rural bar in San Luis, Mexico, they weren't surprised to find themselves creating an organization that would advocate widespread "ecotage"—property damage used to free wilderness areas from the blight of mining, forestry and commercial development. They named the group Earth First! (EF!), after the premise of biocentrism that John Muir and Aldo Leopold had put forth: Every species on Earth has an equal right to exist, the planet is not meant to be exploited, and measures must be taken to assure this. Today, Earth First! has a network of over 50 "bureaus" worldwide guided by project organizers rather than a main office. Edward Abbey's fiction has become reality.

In Oregon, Earth First! members have been buried by bulldozers while blocking logging roads. They've bicycle-locked their necks to strip-mining equipment in New Mexico, and sat for days on platforms high in the giant pine trees of Northern California. It's all part of their program to stop the rape of the environment and to bring animals like the grizzly bear and the desert wolf back from the brink of extinction. In 1985, Dave Foreman published a book, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*. And if Abbey's novel is the movement's inspiration, Foreman's is its field manual—a how-to book that details everything from foiling coyote traps to decommissioning heavy construction equipment to downing power lines.

For the past decade, the Western states had been rocked by this type of environmental actions. And Earth First! had quickly risen to the top of the FBI's radical hit list.

May 1986. Human figures slid out of a battered Toyota Land Cruiser and scampered through the dark Sonoran Desert 25 miles west of Phoenix. The lights of the Palo Verde nuclear power plant flickered and the air reeked of ozone, ionized by 525,000 volts surging through the four sets of power lines leading to the plant. The figures stopped at the base of the nearest tower. One of the gang tied 40 feet of hemp cord to several yards of medium-gauge chain. Moments later, having used their crude tool to short three of the four power lines leading to the nuclear facility, they took off under a wet spray of white-hot metal. Inside the power plant's control room the technicians also scrambled, praying that the backup generator would kick in.

News of the sabotage quickly reached the FBI inside their brick fortress with darkened windows in downtown Phoenix. Headquarters: in Washington DC wanted an investigation opened immediately. By June 1986, the FBI investigation was underway.

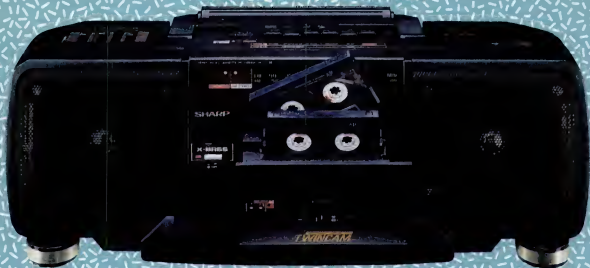
Monkeywrenching continued throughout the next year, but the FBI had few leads on how to break this ring until October 5, 1987. That night, saboteurs armed with a propane torch burned through several metal pylons supporting the chairlift at the Fairchild Snow Bowl ski area, dislodging the resort's lift just before snowfall. Located in the San Carlos range north of Flagstaff, the resort occupies grounds sacred to both the Navajo and Hopi Indian tribes living just to the northeast.

A group calling itself the Evan Mecham Eco-Terrorist International Conspiracy (EMETIC) claimed responsibility, sending communiques to local radio stations and newspapers. Ev Mecham, the star-crossed conservative governor of Arizona, who was later impeached, shrugged his shoulders when asked about EMETIC. He told the *LA Times*: "I haven't the foggiest idea what they're up to or who they are or anything else."

The FBI's investigation, meanwhile, began to pay off. Taking the communiques as an outright challenge, and pressured by anxious desert industries, the Forest Service and Washington, they scoured the region. Finally, field agents located a sales manager with a good memory at the Vern Lewis Welding Supply in Phoenix. On June 6, 1988, he identified Mark Davis from a photo line, saying that he was the man who purchased a torch, regulators and hoses on September 29, 1987. Davis was hard to forget—wild hair atop 5'10" of solid muscle. He had a huge scar on his chest and another on the tip of his nose, which had been bitten off by a dog when he was a boy.

In time, the FBI learned that Davis was no fresh convert to militant environmentalism. He'd been raging in one direction or another since he was a pre-teen growing up in Phoenix with boundless energy and a sharp mind. Now that energy was focused. Davis loved to take long runs in the wilderness area just a few miles from his home near Prescott. He'd go barefoot to a 4,000-foot summit and back at sunrise, cutting a maniacal figure as he hurtled over the rocks, prickly pear cactus and blazing sand. Mark Davis loved the unspoiled wilderness. He often said that he was willing to die to prevent the rape of Mother Earth. That attitude did not sit well with the FBI.

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The man who called himself Mike Tait charmed his way into radical ecofence circles through the friend of Peg Millet, one of Davis' few close friends.

Millet joined Earth First! in 1986 after hitchhiking to one of its events in Southwest Colorado's Uncompahgre National Forest. She hiked through the thick stands of aspen to the gathering atop the 9,000-foot plateau, and was surprised to find that this wasn't some hippie holiday. From dawn to dusk the gathering broke up into workshops on political action, guerrilla theater, litigation and other tactics used to stop mines, construction projects, logging and other rampant abuses of the National Parks and wilderness.

"There were crazy-local folks there," she told her friend Ron Frazier, a metal sculptor who lived near her in Prescott and whom she'd known for two years. "But there was somthin' about 'em that was real sane, real grounded. There were 'woo-woo' people who sat in circles and chanted prayers, but then there were people who had done everything they could through legal channels and then came beseeching Earth First! to do something radical."

Peg recalled the gathering as she and Frazier drove to the Okanogan National Forest in Washington State, for the July 1988 Earth First! Round River Rendezvous. Peg was on the Rendezvous Committee, responsible for setting up the annual gathering of 400-500 EFF campers, and she jabbered happily about last-minute details.

When they arrived, Mike Tait was already wandering amid the cookfires and laughter. Tall, with a bushy blonde beard, Tait looked like a lumberjack in his worn jeans and flannel shirts and boots. Even though he had somehow come to the rendezvous alone, he knew Frazier well and quickly attached himself to the pair.

During the week, Peg and Mike got to know each other pretty well. Tait was a Vietnam veteran, a little shell-shocked maybe, with a "learning disability" that he mentioned often. He worked as a one-man carpentry crew, he said, renovating aged wood-frame houses for an employer "back East."

Millet became fascinated by this guileless, emotionally needy man who told her that he was "just beginning to open up to the environment." Tait showed more than just a passing interest in Earth First! money-wrenching tactics. When he and Frazier talked up future projects, Tait would work himself into a boyish fever.

At the end of the week, the three set off for Prescott, riding three days straight, hip-to-hip in the tiny cab of Frazier's trashed-out white Toyota pickup. "I've been arrested several times before, during resistance actions against the Trident submarine, down at the Seabrook Navy Yard in Connecticut," Tait told the two activists. There was no way of knowing for sure, but Peg believed him. She responded to his openness, giving him an outline of the issues she worked on regularly: halting uranium mines on the North and South Rims of the Grand Canyon, blocking the construction of a University of Arizona observatory project on Mount Graham, near Tucson, and battling the hunters who stalk the dwindling numbers of mountain lions in the Bradshaw Range, where she lived with her husband.

When the trio arrived in Prescott and split up, Peg thought she would never see Tait again.

"I'm going back East," he said.

But a couple of weeks later, Tait showed up at Peg's home in the Bradshaws. The 100-year-old log cabin was called Palace Station, and stood an hour's drive

down a dirt road from Prescott. He took her completely by surprise because she had never told him how to get there.

"My husband's not at home," Peg explained as she found them something to drink. "He's fighting a fire in Alaska."

The two sat and talked, trading stories into the night. Peg told him about her stint as a firefighter with the National Forest Service, where she had met her husband. She was a true cowgirl, grown up breaking and riding horses, eventually running a stable for a couple of years in the Peer Gynt Valley in Norway. In her teens and early 20s, she laughed, she'd been a gypsy.

"I was a bum," she grinned.

Tait turned on his charm, letting the urgency of his problems diminish some. He asked if they should go out somewhere and Peg realized that she really liked this guy.



"Shit," she said right back with a big grin, "let's go dancing!" Her husband didn't dance much, and often sent her off with friends to do the boogying "for the both of them. He didn't care. Before long, Mike and Peg were hitting every rodeo and dance hall in town."

Tait never really romanced Peg, though she thought he'd had that in mind. But he did become a frequent visitor to Palace Station, helping her husband split wood for days at a time, sawing up timber in their small sawmill, and installing a wood heater in the hot tub.

By early September, Tait moved to a small house in Prescott saying that his boss in the East wanted him to locate and remodel homes in this alpine, WASPy retirement town. In time, his house was well-known among the area's eco-activists.

On Labor Day, 1988, Tait, Peg Millet and a few dozen other rural activists drove to the site of the observatory that Prescott College had proposed putting atop the 11,000-foot summit of Mount Graham. Earth First! had been fighting the project for months, and had decided to plant dozens of seedlings on the old Forest Service road that was to be resurfaced for the telescope's construction. Tait, wanting to be in on it, produced a number of seedlings from the rear of his truck, a bashed red-and-black pickup with a

bubble sunroof that he called "Thunder Dier."

"What is that, Scotch pine?" asked Nancy Zierenberg, an Earth First! organizer. "Those aren't a native species." Other EFFers took a look and agreed.

"It doesn't matter," Tait shot back. "I want to plant them anyway. We have to block this road." An argument ensued, and Tait got pissed off. It was typical of the infighting that goes on in all small radical groups, however, the group voted Tait down.

Tait was upset, but he still joined this wacky crew as they linked arms and pledged their bodies to the mountain. Decked out in squirrel, bear and raccoon outfits, they chanted: "No scopes! Save Mount Graham!" before a handful of media folks and a university rep. Tait impressed everyone with his commitment to the earth, for someone who hadn't been working with them for long.

"Why are you so willing to be arrested?" someone asked him.

"It's my job," he answered.

Every time the Earth First! members were with Tait, his commitment to the environment became more clear. Just before Labor Day he confided to Peg that he was a tree-spiker. He would spend nights in the Arizona pine forests sinking big nails in trees marked for cutting—a technique that, done right, doesn't harm the tree, just the saw blades.

Now, as they drove away from the observatory site, he leaned over and asked her to help him pull up the survey flags that marked the path of the proposed road. The truck zig-zagged down the dirt path as they each took turn reaching out the windows, snatching flags from stakes and branches of *Ponderosa* pines.

There was no reason to suspect that the feds were closing in. The EMETIC gang worked very fast and very clean, sometimes not even leaving footprints in the dust. They were bold with the success of their earlier strikes when, just a few weeks after the Mount Graham protest, they went after the power lines feeding the Hermit, Pine Nut and Canyon uranium mines on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The mines disgorge thousands of tons of earth on the border of the national park land, producing radioactive tailings and releasing a fine uranium dust on the breeze. When workers arrived on the morning of September 26, 1988, dozens of support poles lay scattered like Lincoln Logs, costing the mines days of down time.

It was all over the news for days.

And then they did it again. On the night of October 25, EMETIC visited the Fairfield Snow Bowl for a second time—clambering through an early snow, burning through the chairlift's main support pylon with a torch, and sending communique to every radio and television station in Northern Arizona. They warned the resort operators to stop developing in the San Francisco Peaks.

It was as if Mike Tait had always been there. He was a one of the group. From time to time he would drop into the Tucson office of the EFF Journal—a familiar face at the open, white farmhouse on Granada Street in Tucson. No one took notice of his comings and goings.

Peg decided that her new friend should get to know her friend Mark Davis, thinking they might be good for each other—a couple of solitary, over-intense, physically exacting ecotours.

But Mark Davis was the one man Tait could not im-

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press. He'd been watching this newcomer—his movements around town and within Earth First!—and he just didn't trust him. Actually, Mark Davis didn't trust anyone, except Peg and a precious few others. He didn't even consider himself a member of Earth First! He supported them, but he liked to work in small groups or alone, and on a larger scale. He knew about Peg's growing relationship with Tait.

"He's a deep plant," Mark told Peg one day. "Yes, he is a deep plant," she replied, completely missing the gist of Mark's unintended pun.

Peg really did like Mike Tait, despite what Mark Davis thought. She came to think of him as such a friend that she began to reveal her most private secrets. Three days before the uranium mine caper she talked freely about her role in the first assault on the Fairfield Snow Bowl in 1987, the FBI later claimed. They say she eventually implicated Mark Davis.

In March 1989, after Millett claimed to have "checked out" Tait by involving him in several acts of ecotage and searching her own heart, Davis opened up to the newcomer just a little. The two began to meet for lunch at Nick's Feed Yer Face, a submarine sandwich shop in Prescott. They'd take their sandwiches and sit in the courthouse park, talking about Davis's twisted, rocky past, Tait's various problems, and most of all about monkeywrench strategy.

Some mornings, Tait would drive to Davis's house at dawn in his new pickup, a blue-and-silver Chevy with bumper stickers on the rear that said: "Don't Nuke My Fruits" and "Clearcut Wal-Mart." Off the two would go, running barefoot in the mountains. Tait even joined Davis in his kickboxing workouts on the heavy bag.

"I see them together, and it's real touching," a friend said. "It's like Mark finally has a male equal."

Gradually, Tait got to know it all. Davis had grown up the son of an oil man, bumping around places like Indonesia and Libya. He was precocious and idealistic from the start. By the time he was 16 and living in Phoenix, he'd been in and out of so much trouble that he was put in the California Youth Authority's Los Angeles "rehab center" for unruly kids.

"There was a lot of fighting, rapes, attempted rapes," is how Mark remembers the place. "I'm this screwed-up, basically naive, suburban white kid, and this is right after the Watts riots. I came out of three pretty crazy, pretty wild."

In March, Tait claims, Davis and Millett included him in discussions as they worked out an ambitious anti-nuke action that would stun the West: The gang would down transmission lines leading to the Palo Verde nuclear power plant in Arizona, the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant near San Luis Obispo, California, and the Rocky Flats atomic weapons facility near Denver, Colorado. The power outages would prove to the nuclear industry that local ecotours had the power to shut those facilities down.

But they needed a practice run. After a lot of deliberation, they decided that they should cut a transmission tower to the Central Arizona water-lift project. EFI had followed Edward Abbey's lead in battling for the preservation of the Colorado as America's last great "wild" river and wanted it untapped, undisturbed and unmanaged. As it is now, none of its water reaches the Colorado's original mouth in Mexico's Gulf of California. Tait was vehemently opposed to the plan. He thought they should wait, to case the plants first and assemble a larger group of radicals who could more realistically carry out the plan. Tait

seemed determined to involve Earth First's principle members. He wanted more people, more money, more backing by Earth First!

It was the money that finally pulled Earth First! into this grand caper. In late March, Tait says he saw EFI's founder Dave Foreman hand over \$500 to Davis so he could buy supplies for his Prescott operations—not a whopping sum, but significant coming from a man who makes his money as a writer and environmental speaker.

On May 13, Tait went to Tucson where the Earth First! office was holding an informal porch sale to raise a little money. Tait says he got another \$100 from Foreman in the rear office, to be combined with the money already given to Davis. Then Mike bought a pair of used hiking boots off the porch and left for Prescott.

They worked out an ambitious anti-nuke action that would stun the West: The gang would down the transmission lines leading to the Palo Verde nuclear power plant in Arizona.

That was enough. \$680 dollars was all they needed. On the brilliant desert afternoon of May 30, Tait and Davis packed up the torch and some tools, picked up Peg Millett and a local friend named Dr. Marc A. Baker, and headed off down Highway 60 toward Wenden. Tait barely knew Baker, a cerebral, understated doctor of botany who worked with the cholla cactus and spent years at a time in the rain forests of Peru. But Davis and Millett knew him, and they needed buds.

They stopped for dinner on the way, the four in high spirits, a little jittery. Davis glowed with anticipation. A few hours later they pulled off the highway into a desert wash about a mile up Alamo Lake Road, and waited for nightfall.

They were out of the car less than five minutes when the sky exploded with light. Men in black SWAT jumpsuits and body armor came from everywhere—roaring out from under cover of cacti, brush and rocks, brandishing FBI-standard H&K MP-5 sub-machine guns. Stumbling back from the tower, Marc Baker tried to run but couldn't because he had taped square boards to the bottoms of his boots to avoid leaving footprints. Davis flipped up his visor and stood flat-footed, blinded by the torch, vaguely making out the guns that were now leveled at him.

Millett panicked, but slipped through the ring of more than 50 agents and into the open desert, eluding trackers with infrared spotting scopes and making it to Highway 60. There she lay, gasping on the hot asphalt. She was 35 years old, but her legs were solid from years of hiking. Within the hour, the Tempe Police brought in a bloodhound named Buford T. Justice and several others, along with men on horseback to run them, but the dogs lost her scent on the road. Two helicopters called Black Hawk and Night Stalker, equipped with night-vision systems, chopped through the dust for half the night. But Millett managed to hitchhike back to Prescott, over 60 miles away, in

plenty of time for work the next day.

The feds arrested her that morning, on the job at Prescott's Planned Parenthood Clinic. She was tossed into a car and taken down to Phoenix, two hours away, to join Davis and Baker at the Maricopa County jail.

Hours later, at 7 a.m., a half-dozen federal agents burst into the Tucson home of Dave Foreman, pushing past his wife to the bedroom where the 41-year-old environmentalist lay sleeping, stark naked but for his earplugs. The agents jerked Foreman out of bed, handcuffed him, gave him a pair of shorts and threw him in the back of a car.

"Mr. Foreman is the worst of the group," a US Attorney in Arizona later said of the radical environmentalist who cofounded the deep resistance movement Earth First! "He was the financier, the leader, sort of the guru to get all of this going."

Calling the bust "a significant development in law enforcement," the US Attorney promised that this was just the start of their roundup of environmental terrorists.

The day after the raids last May 30, the FBI called a press conference in Phoenix. They had been after this group for years and now it was time to crow. According to their point-man, David Small, the FBI had even used its elite anti-terrorism unit on the case. But the key element in the lengthy investigation was the one FBI agent who went undercover in the suspect's organization, and eventually betrayed them.

All but one Foreman were held without bail, charged with a bizarre conspiracy to shut down three nuclear power plants in Arizona, California and Colorado. The prosecutors had convinced a federal magistrate that the group could have caused a "China Syndrome" meltdown scenario by downing the nuke plant lines. They were also accused of carrying a cache of weapons that the FBI said they found in the back of Tait's truck. Meanwhile, Mike Tait, who had lived among the gang for over a year, befriending them, living as if their cause was his cause, was the only person involved in the activities who was not arrested. In fact, he was never seen again.

Since the May 30 bust, over two dozen Earth First! affiliates have been either subpoenaed or questioned by the FBI. Houses in Washington, Montana, Arizona and Colorado have been searched for ties to the arrested group. Denver FBI spokesman Bob Pence says that the sabotage activities have "necessitated us to move before we'd have liked to."

"They were clearly after EFI," says Foreman. "If you look at the history of the FBI in trying to disrupt and destroy dissent groups . . . especially in the light of COINTELPRO operations . . . that's what they do."

That idea has green activists all over the country seeing red. "Is this war?" they ask, pointing out that it is the first time that Big Brother has come to call on the American environmental movement—one whose "gurus" are such inflammatory, red-white-and-green figures as bird painter John Audubon, explorer John Muir and novelist Ed Abbey.

"We have brutally, brutally assaulted each other and the planet," rages Mark Davis inside the Maricopa County jail, his prison blues shining in his eyes. "We have misused the gift of sentence. Once your eyes open up and you see it, the shame is intense and terrible. We're about at the end of the human strain. Unless humans begin to show some of the beauty they were born with, and can actually manifest, our little biological experiment here is ended."

2

COOL TO BE MISSED



The major label album debut from one of the finest bands around, making great music you need to be tuned into.

WINTER HOURS



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ROADSIDE FLOWERS
Produced by
Lenny Kaye



The man behind *The Bible* joins forces with one of Austin's fastest rising stars on one of the most amazing albums of the year.

BOO HEWERDINE & DARDEN SMITH



Evidence
Featuring
ALL I WANT
(IS EVERYTHING)
UNDER THE
DARKEST MOON

A Fan's Notes

The Who are the best bloody rock band in the world. No shut up. They just are.

Article by Celia Farber

turned on the radio at 7:40 p.m. on June 27th and a DJ was announcing, in that near hysterical delivery DJs have, that they would be broadcasting the WHO'S ONE AND ONLY LIVE PERFORMANCE OF TOMMY SINCE 1969 AT RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL. I didn't have a ticket. I had a stomach ache. The show was supposed to start in 20 minutes. I couldn't stand it. My heart was pounding. People look to me funny when I say this, but the truth is I used to pray to Pete Townshend when I was a teenager. I mean not literally, but kind of. I talked to him a lot. We had all the same problems. Too skinny, too sensitive, weird nose, screwy family. He was my favorite thing on earth. The whole band was. First it was Daltry. I saw "Tommy," the movie, about 15 years ago. I was 15. I thought Roger was the best. Who. I thought Pete was Roger's guitar player or something. Hell, I was only 9 years old. And Daltry was awfully cute with that hair and everything. But it was purely physical. And eventually I caught on to the fact that Pete wrote everything.

Pete taught me everything I know. I played *Quadrophenia* over and over and over and over. It was like survival guide. A kind of post-modern existentialist rock and roll Bible, if you will. Pete taught me all the essentials. That I could take on anyone and not be scared of a bloody nose. That a paranoid is a person who has some idea of what is really going on. Pete said none of it was my fault. I wasn't nuts. *They* were.

Pete said: "You got altered information. You were told to not take chances. You missed out on new dances and now you're losing all your dimples." Deep shit. Very existentialist. "Get a job and fight to keep it. Strike out to reach a mountain. Be so nice on the outside but inside keep ambition." "We're the slaves of a phony leader. Breathe the air we have blown you." Very anarchist. Pete started Punk.

He was like the God of the underdogs. Like, don't tell me Mick Jagger could give a fuck if you were skinny and ugly and lived in a working class industrial housing complex in a small, dark, freezing shoe factory town in the middle of Sweden, which is a damn near totalitarian society if you ask me. It sucked.

So I stayed in my room and jumped on my bed and blasted the Who. Then my sister Bibi would come in

and blast Led Zeppelin. She turned me on to the Who in the first place, but somehow she got sidetracked by this long, awful Led Zeppelin phase. What the hell did stairways and misty mountain tops and forest nymphs with long, flowing hair have to do with our current situation, I wondered. Still I was kind of jealous. Bibi had boyfriends with long hair and turquoise jewelry who were reading *Lord of the Rings* and seemed to know about all kinds of mystical stuff.

Then Punk came, thank heaven, and I cut my hair and dyed it orange. I declared a boycott on all supergroups, which was the thing to do, and started a band. None of us knew how to play. I was heavenly. I tried to convince my friends that the Who weren't rock id!l assholes like some other bands. That they kicked more ass than every last punk band combined—but just happened to also write great songs. That Pete cared about the punk movement. Even better, like I said, he started it.

So I had been waiting 14 years to see the Who, but I had a stomach ache and no ticket. I had exactly \$200 to my name and I had heard that tickets were going for \$1,000. But I had to go anyway, so I called my friend Greg. He's a Who fan. His sister threw him down a laundry chute when he was only two.

I met Greg at a party four years ago. He was sitting around strumming a guitar when suddenly I deciphered a few chords from Quad, and came barreling over. I made him play every song on the album, even the ones he didn't know, while I thrashed around, windmilling on an air guitar, jumping like some spastic person and singing at the top of my lungs. "LAUGH AND SAY I'M GREEN. I'VE SEEN THINGS YOU'LL NEVER SEE. BABADABADABADABADABADABA. TALK BEHIND MY BACK BUT I'M OFF THE BEATEN TRACK." It went on for hours. Watch out for Who fans when they're trashed.

By five in the morning, Greg and Bibi and I decided to have a band together. Bibi and Greg on guitars and me on drums. At this point I wanted to be Keith Moon. Poor Greg though, I kept trying to turn him into Pete. I was always after him going, "Pleeease Greg, don't



London features

Dressed right for a beach-fight—the vintage years.



海城羅珍錯恰如銀樹正開花

ST. JOHN CHURCH RESTAURANT



Keith Moon, the most irreplaceable drummer in the world, with Pete Townshend.

play the thing, attack it! Throw it across the room. Hit Bibi over the head with it! Do you things! But don't just stand there. Come on Greg, I know you're angry and traumatized. Now take it out on your instrument!"

But Greg wanted us to actually get signed. He said I thrashed too much and needed to take drum lessons and lay the fuck off the crash cymbals and be crisper, tidier, more Eighties, more Stewart Copeland. I said, "God forbid, Copeland! That blond sugarpuff with his clever little rim-shot tricks and his damned Brazilian influences! What does he know about rock and roll? He's an impostor like all the rest of them! He's the enemy! People like him are corrupting our youth! Ruining rock and roll! Lobotomizing it! And you're helping them! In fact you're helping them undermine the very foundations of..."

"Cel, shut up," Greg would say right about then. "You just don't want to practice."

"Practicing isn't the point," I would retort. "Blowing the roof off is."

"You can't blow the roof off unless you've practiced," said Greg.

"Bullshit," I would yelp. "You can't blow the roof off unless you don't give a fuck about the roof."

I hate the Eighties. I don't know who all these people on MTV are or what they're singing about or why. I can't help it. I've looked under chairs. I've looked under tables. All I see is wimps, everywhere. Wimps and tits. Help me Pete! What am I supposed to do? I hate the music. I hate the clothes. I hate the drumming. I hate the attitudes. I hate the Fine Young fucking Canadianals too. O.K.? What on earth is going on, Pete? Pete says: "We are the generation with no balls. And I'm gonna keep repeating that until somebody shows me differently."

And people wonder why we still flock by the millions to see the Who. They think it matters that Townshend is half deaf, or that he has kids our age. We couldn't care less. All we know is that in their heyday, the roadies would come out after a Who show in white coats and shovel the equipment into buckets. Every seat demolished. As Keith once put it, "the whole place would look like Atlanta the Hun just got through." Now that's what I call a proper band.

The Who was very much Keith Moon, who actually did things like drive his car up the steps and through the plate glass window of a hotel, toss the keys to the desk clerk and say, "park it." Other drummers played beats with fills thrown in. Keith made beats out of fills. Nobody ever figured out how he did it. He sounded like he had four feet and eight arms. On Keith's third grade report card, his music teacher gave him a B minus and commented, "great ability, but must guard against a tendency to show off."

Pete tells a story about when Keith took eight horse tranquilizers and wound up paralyzed in a wheelchair. The doctor said his heart was only beating once every 30 seconds, that he was clinically dead. Keith opened his eyes and said, "Fuck off."

Clearly, although he may have been the funniest little bastard who ever lived, he was tragic. A seeker, a really desperate man, looking for love. A bellboy. Always running at someone's heel. People who knew him describe him as insane, yes—but also kind, affectionate, generous, very cheerful and very sad. As Pete told *Musicians* in a recent interview, Keith could barely play towards the end. He'd come in and throw up on the mixing desk and Pete had to give him hell. Just before he died, Pete says, "he started to call me up just to say goodnight and I love you. He died that about 10 times, and you could tell he was crying a little bit. He'd say 'You do believe me don't you?' I'd say, 'Yes, but you're still an asshole.'"

They put him in that chair that so ironically says "NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY" on the Who *Are You?* cover, to hide his growing potbelly. That was his last album. He was the most irreplaceable drummer in the world.

So anyway—the Who, Radio City Music Hall. I called Greg. "Hi, it's me. Let's go see the Who."

Silence.

"You're a nut, Cel. We don't have tickets."

"We'll get tickets."

"Oh yeah, you got \$2,000?"

"Greg! It's the Who!"

"No, it's not the Who."

"Well it's close enough. It's Petel And Roger! And John!"

"It's everybody and their uncle on percussion and horns, too."

"So?"

"No. I'm busy."

"Well I'm going."

"You won't get in."

"I'll get in."

Click.

**Tommy camps in every city
Millions flocking in like sheep
What they want ain't cheap's a pity
But who am I to upset their dreams?**

It was 7:55 p.m. when I got to Radio City. People everywhere, swirling, muttering. "How much?" I asked.

"\$600"

"For one? You're kidding right?"

"No doll. They're orchestra seats. You want em?"

"I only have \$200."

The tall, black man cackled at me. "Two hundred! Go buy a couple T-shirts fuh dat money, honey."

I was starting to get pissed. Why does everybody have to be such a pig about everything?

I put my walkman on. The show was about to start. Some DJ was backstage having hysterics all over the poor band, like it was the Superbowl or something.

The overture to Tommy started. Yep, it was the Who alright. I couldn't see them but I know it was them. God bless them. God bless John Entwistle with his bass that sounds like something out of a whale's belly. It was unbearable, standing over there. I had to take the headphones off. I stalked frantically back and forth in front of the dwindling pack of scalpers, hoping they would start dropping their price. Some guy in a suit and his squealing girlfriend in a cocktail dress and heels suddenly appeared, hatched from a big white limo, and of course, right there in front of me, the bastard walks up to one of the scalpers, pulls out a wad of bills, gets two tickets, and dashes off.

**Don't rush—keep steady! Have your money ready.
Buy your way to heaven. That comes to one pound
seven. Bless you luv!**

"T-SHIRTS! WHO T-SHIRTS!"

"How much?" I asked.

"\$20."

"Each?"

"T-SHIRTS!"

**Buy your shades and earplugs here. Keep in line I've
got a huge supply. Get your Tommy record, you can
really hear him talk. Tommy pics and badges. Half a
nick for the cork. You lucky people.**

"Ya need a ticket? C'mere. Walk with me."

All I remember is that he was black and had a blue and white sweat suit. I said, "I only have \$200."

"Gimme \$250."

"I just told you I only have \$200."

"O.K. Two hundred. C'mon walk next to me, the cops are lookin' at me. I don't wanna get lifted. Get your money."

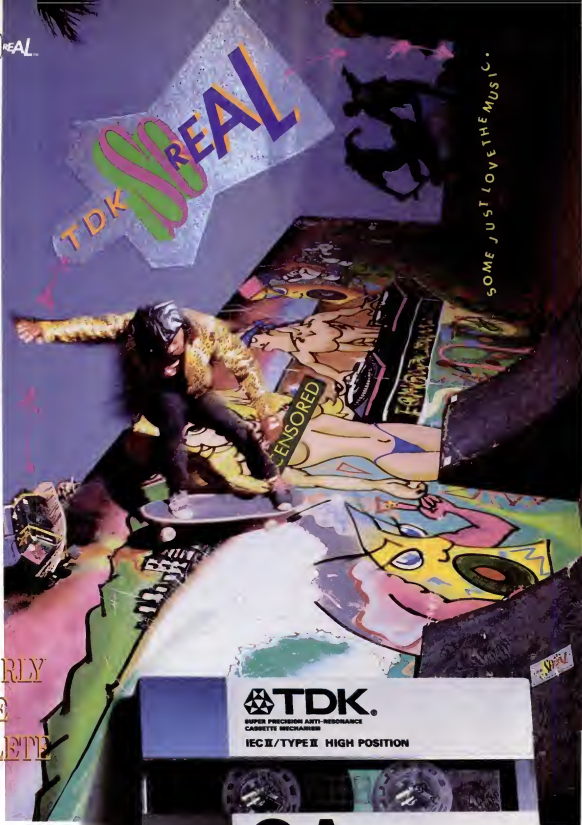
"Show me the ticket first."

"You wanna see the ticket? It's a good ticket I'm telling you. Orchestra seats. Man I could get \$500 to dis ticket. Keep walking."

Continued on page 102

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SOME
LOVE
THE FACT
THAT OUR
NEW
SA AUDIO
CASSETTES
FEATURE
ULTRA-
FINE
SUPER
AVILYN
PARTICLES
THAT CLEARLY
REPRODUCE
THE COMPLETE
MUSIC
SPECTRUM
OF DIGITAL
SOURCES.



SOME JUST LOVE THE MUSIC.







She Sells Sanctuary

Natalie Merchant of 10,000 Maniacs is the singer who killed the pop star: concerned, talented and passionately involved. When she talks, people listen. And listen.

Article by Jonathan Van Meter

A n impurity has intruded on Natalie Merchant's prudent little world. A lone, gray trail of cigarette smoke is traveling straight up towards the corporate drop ceiling of the Elektra Records conference room on the 1st floor of a tall, bustling building in midtown Manhattan. The cigarette itself sits, unsmoked, in a huge ashtray at the end of a long, shiny table that overwhelms the room. Natalie has just walked in.

"Ohhhh. You can't smoke," she cries, stopping dead in the doorway. "No, no, no. You can't smoke. I'll die." This is followed by a long, weird silence, which is followed by her nervous, defensive laugh. An almost embarrassed laugh. The cigarette is mushed out, the pack is put away, and when the coast is clear, Natalie, in a forest green skirt and jacket and little black, ballerina-like shoes (which appear to be leather, but probably aren't), sits herself down in one of the abundant high-back chairs. A record company minion fetches her a small bottle of Perrier and a cup of ice. She drinks the water straight from the bottle, because, she says, the ice could be "polluted."

A year ago, in, say, a batik, flowery peasant skirt and T-shirt, Natalie Merchant would have looked like you would expect the lead singer of a groovy-folkie-pop band to look in this environment—out of place. But today, wearing a few pieces of carefully selected, tasteful jewelry, and her hair in a chignon, all it would take to make her indistinguishable from the junior executives who march in and out of this building on urgent, business-obsessed missions is a pair of pumps and a briefcase.

This is the new, *grownup* Natalie. And this image change is reminiscent, if only vaguely, of the first time Madonna ditched her rags, French braided her hair, and donned a pair of horn rims. *Take me seriously*, it seems to say. It is one of those things that newly successful pop-girls do. They evolve.

Natalie Merchant defends herself.

"I started singing when I was 16 with this group. And a lot of people who have been watching us for years have watched me grow up. But I feel like I'm finally being liberated from this child... this childhood..."

A long pause, a heavy sigh.

"... this folk-wait reputation. I would like to be liberated from that. And that doesn't mean that I would like to wear a leather jacket and start strutting onstage. It's just... I think that... I've matured. It sounds apparent on the new album. The lyrics, the instrumentation, the arrangement, it just sounds... much... older."

Photograph by Jon Ragel

At 25, Natalie Merchant, in front of her band, 10,000 Maniacs, has become one of the more compelling figures of American pop music. Her big ethnic lips, kicky little hair cut, insinuating alto (which seems to have developed its own not-of-this-hemisphere accent), and whirling dervish-child stage persona have become an obsession for sensitive white people everywhere, and caused boy critics, both here and in Britain, to gush. But for all it's worth, that's really just icing. What rivets is the band's music, and even more, the powerful short stories of Natalie's lyrics. On *Blind Man's Zoo*, the band's fourth LP, the lyrics are, among many other things, grown up. Not that 10,000 Maniacs ever dabbled in teenage subject matter, but this album (unlike the first three) is utterly without levity or humor. The song topics—toxic spills, South Africa, teenage pregnancy, the Vietnam War, US intervention in Central America—are the stuff of documentary series. 10,000 Maniacs are the public television of pop music.

Because of Natalie's obsession with religious iconography, childhood motifs and wartime themes, the music is loaded with some powerful imagery:

He's God's mad disciple, a righteous title, for the Word he heard he so misunderstood. Though simple minded, a crippled man, to know this man is to fear this man, to shake when he comes. Wasn't it God that let Puritans in Salem do what they did to the unfaithful?

"There ought to be a word for what we do," Natalie said last year, trying to figure out what to call 10,000 Maniacs' music. Today, she's still in a quandary. "We haven't made an

album that deserves a folk description since *The Wishing Chair*. But are we pop? I don't know. Pop music has evolved quite a bit since... oh God... since Buddy Holly. If that was pop. Or the Raspberries. Or K.C. and the Sunshine Band. What is pop music? I think pop is a three-and-half-minute song with verses and choruses, which is, I think, the only definition that could stand as the... what would you say? The omniscient definition for all those different groups."

Natalie Merchant is, basically, a hick at heart. She grew up in the rural-industrial town of Jamestown, New York, where, she has said (and sung), young guys join the military just to get out. Her Roman Catholic upbringing came to a halt when she was eight, when her parents divorced and her mother, excommunicated, married an atheist. Natalie dropped out

Take me seriously, her new look seems to say. It is one of those things that newly successful pop-girls do. They evolve.

of high school at 16 to work in a health food store—the Eighties equivalent of a head shop—and walked around threatening that she would commit suicide by the age of 25. Doesn't sound like the portrait of an artist as a young woman who would grow up to write songs about a myriad of global issues. But this is, after all, America. Anything's possible.

"Because my parents were fans of music," she says, "there was always music in the house. My grandfather played mandolin, guitar and accordion. He always claimed that back in Italy one of his cousins was a famous opera singer. My other grandmother on my mother's side claims her grandmother was named Byron and that we're related to Lord Byron. She'll swear to it until the day she dies. Byron had an incestuous friendship with his half sister so she always told us we were the bastard children of Byron, and don't forget it. My grandfather on the other side was Irish and he was a piano tuner and sang in a barbershop quartet. I took piano training for a while, and voice training, but I never really pursued it because it was too intimidating—the teachers and recitals. So I stopped everything, but I kept playing the piano."

In 1981, when she was 16, Natalie was invited to sing with a band called Still Life, which included three current Maniacs—bassist Steve Gustafson, keyboardist Dennis Drew and guitarist Robert Buck. Drummer Jerry Augustyniak joined a couple years later, and rhythm guitarist John Lombardo (who was the band's early musical force) quit while the Maniacs were beginning to work on *In My Tribe*. All of the current band members except Gustafson contribute musical arrangements to the albums. But it is Natalie who pens every concerned, self-righteous, at times pretentious, yet thoroughly engaging lyric.

This, from a formerly suicidal high school dropout:

Please forgive us, we don't know what was done in our name. There'll be more trials like this in mercenary heydays. When they're so apt to wrap themselves up in the stripes and stars and find that they are able to call themselves heroes and to justify murder



Stoli. For the purist.

by their fighters for freedom.

It is from a song on *Blind Man's Zoo* called "Please Forgive Us." When asked, "What's it's all about, Natalie?" she launches into a litany that is, like the song and the woman herself, intriguing and repelling all at once.

"I've taken upon myself the obligation of making a public plea to Central America for forgiveness for what has been done to their country by all of the money that's been provided for military aid to rebel groups there. I'm not apologizing to the Sandinistas. I'm apologizing to the people who have been caught in the cross fire, whose lives have been permanently disrupted by the loss of family members, the loss of their homes, the torturing of their children. And all done with our tax dollars. And I just...my heart doesn't bleed for either side. What I'm concerned about is the people who knew absolutely nothing in that country and just found themselves in the middle of a war zone...."

After 10 solid minutes of her talking full tilt on this subject, there is a break, and the diatribe appears to be over. She laughs that nervous, embarrassed laugh, and then defends herself.

"I don't like getting too involved speaking about politics because I'm sure that my knowledge of it is extremely limited. But it just seems apparent to me that it's...wrong. It's really wrong."

There are other songs on the album that give rise to comparable lectures on current events.

Take, for example, toxic waste: "Poison in the Well," she says, "is a very obvious song, especially now, with what's happening in Alaska. But I was writing about Hooker Chemical Company in Buffalo and the Southern Love Canal, which everyone looks at as



ancient history now. And it's not ancient history where we live, because it's still very much in the press. It's a horrible event. Many people died of cancer. Many women to this day cannot conceive children, cannot stay pregnant. But who's responsible? Is it the government's responsibility to regulate where these people are dumping and how they dump and

what's done with the site after they've dumped? Who's held accountable? Is it the company that buys it? Is it the company that manufactures this product that causes this waste? Who's responsible for the oil spill in Alaska? Is it the man who was stewarding the ship, or is it the company that allowed him to be the captain of that ship? Who's responsible? Is there any way to compensate for the wildlife that's being destroyed and all the water and coastal areas that have been destroyed and the livelihood of the people who depend on them?"

It is an impressive monologue, made all the more so coming right after her claim that she hesitates to talk politics. She is very aggressive in conversation: looking at you, talking at you, pausing not to invite dialogue but to announce that the subject is exhausted. Then, prompted, she launches into the next manifest.

On teenage pregnancy: "'Eat For Two' is about a young woman who doesn't think that being pregnant is her best option right now. But she's five months along, so I avoid the abortion question, which is something that I didn't really want to write about in a song. It's a warning. Because the last verse is, 'Young girls should run and hide instead of risk the game by taking dares with yes.' She's saying, 'Don't be like me. Look at what a mess I've made of my life.' And now it's going to be the most public mistake she could ever make. I hope people don't misinterpret it as a pro-life song."

Or South Africa: "'Hateful Hate' is about the situation in Africa and its historical context—what led up to what's happening there today. There's this intolerance of the differences between races and cultures that the colonial Europeans express towards Afri-

Jon Kugel





Before they named themselves after a horror movie they were called *Still Life*. 10,000 Maniacs (l-r): drummer Jerome Augustyniak, bassist Steven Gustafson, keyboardist Dennis Drew, guitarist Rob Buck and Natalie Merchant.

cans—that they were primitive and savage. But this is all tired. Everyone knows what their attitude was.”

All through these quietly possessing orations, Natalie Merchant sits comfortably, legs up underneath her, in the rich corporate halls of the record company that pays her bills—the very symbol, she might argue, of what is wrong with the world. She fidgets, running her finger along an imaginary groove on the top of the huge, sleek table that miniaturizes her. As Natalie admitted to her friend/peer Michael Stipe of R.E.M. when they interviewed each other for *Musician* magazine last year, “There are times when I am humiliated by who I am and what I do.”

Perhaps she fidgets out of embarrassment. “I’d like to be able to do more than just write songs about all of this. I think that’s the frustrating thing. I really care about the quality of life universally. What can I do to improve it? Right now, all I’m doing is the

occasional benefit in addition to writing these songs, which I think is pretty important. Raising other people’s awareness. But some day I hope there’s going to be something—something that won’t involve the music industry, something that I could do. That could be so many things. Which doesn’t necessarily mean going on marches either. Or putting on telethons. It’s... it’s... it’s something else. Something direct.”

She laughs nervously, defensively, once again. And there is a long, thoughtful pause.

Onstage at Radio City Music Hall this summer, flanked by tapestries of an elephant and a crescent moon, Natalie stopped between songs to say, “There’s a room backstage, it’s called the Animal Room.” The audience roared, just as they had earlier, when Natalie turned around and shook her backside at them. “It’s nothing to applaud,” she said. “It is a room without any sunlight or any ventilation. It is where the animals wait to come out and perform. Think about it.” It was classic Natalie.

Here is a woman who is encouraging people to merely *think* about the problems she so eloquently writes, sings and talks about. And she truly seems to care—deeply—herself. But is that enough? One can’t help wondering if, perhaps, she has some regrets about the chosen vehicle for her social work.

“I remember when I was 15, I worked as a volunteer for a handicapped children’s summer program. And a lot of the children that I was working with were older than I was, but had mental and physical handicaps. And there was something very fulfilling about being... needed by the administrators of the camp and also the teachers in the classes, and the kids themselves after a while when they got to know me and depend on me. For a while I thought I would go into special education as a field.”

Her voice fades to a whisper, and then, almost inaudibly, she says, “But... I didn’t.”

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MEATY BEATY BIG AND BOUNCY

Two sex bombs clash. Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth meets L.L. Cool J, an amigo with an ego.

Article by Kim Gordon

I dial 1-900-L.L.-COOL-J and a voice comes on: "I'm sorry, your call cannot be completed." I can't get through. I'm stuck in Manhattan's Lower East Side staring at the cover of L.L. Cool J's new album, *Walking with a Panther*. A panther is a wild jungle beast but the one with L.L. is like a cuddly, adorable baby. They're sitting there just as normal as can be—like a boy and his dog. But this is no normal boy, living in no normal (white, middle-class) neighborhood. This boy's toys are a Porsche, a Benz, an Audi, a BMW. And a new house he calls "Wonderland."

L.L. lives in a realm of fantasy. On his trip to Africa's Ivory Coast in late spring, L.L. Cool J was crowned Chief Kwasi Achi'brou by the village elders of Gran-Bassah after donating seed money for a hospital. Most young rappers have sports heroes as role models, so it's normal for L.L. to identify with Mike Tyson. But it's Mr. T in "Rocky III" quoted in L.L.'s bio to express his deep hunger, his appetite for achievement: "I'll crush any man who tries to take what's mine." His bond with his audience may be that he doesn't distinguish between real and make-believe.

L.L.'s publicist can't believe anyone in Sonic Youth knows about L.L. Cool J. But his first album *Radio* was one of the things that turned me on to rap. I've never interviewed a pop star before, and having just seen L.L. on the "Arsenio Hall Show," I'm nervous. He was so gutsy doing "I'm That Type of Guy." So many explicit lyrics were bleeped out, but the music kept its suspenseful lure. L.L.'s sexual gestures around a stationary woman constrained by her tight-fitting dress only enhanced it. L.L.'s charisma can't be censored.

When I—the Lower East Side scum-rocker, feeling really, really uncool—arrive at the rehearsal studio, the dancers are taking a break. They're real friendly; we talk about my shoes for a second. They are three girls—one of whom, Rosie Perez, is in Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing"—and a young boy. A bunch of other people are just hanging out. L.L. is preoccupied talking to some stylists, gesturing about clothes. Occasionally he shoots a look my way; I have no idea if he's expecting me or he's just looking at my out-of-place bleached blonde hair.

The stylists leave and everyone starts another run-through. Cut Creator is at the turntables and the MC's doing live calls. The dancers are aggressive and electric—combining African and New York street dance moves, in full control of their bodies, thrusting and shaking, driven on by some otherworldly energy. L.L. dances with them, hulking around behind like a shadow boxer striking a pose, then sliding right into the moves alongside them. Against his dirty gestures, the

girls look so fresh that everything seems hypersexual, wound up, exaggerated. It's more sinister than sexual. The message is, "If America is Sex then, well, O.K. Here it comes right down your throat."

After about a half-hour of nonstop thrash falling down on the floor, they stop. L.L. catches his breath. Everyone's getting psyched for the tour—L.L.'s first in almost two years. Lisa Lisa is there, too, probably rehearsing in another studio. She laughs and covers her face at L.L.'s nasty moves while I feel like disappearing. L.L. slowly approaches, checking me out but stopping to talk to friends. I jump up, walk over, grab his hand, introduce myself and say, "Can I shake your hand?" He's aloof. I marvel how boys who're tough or cool to cover up their sensitivity keep attracting girls and fooling themselves. L.L. has honed this juvenile tendency to a skill. It's the kind of thing white male sex symbols are made of—from Clark Gable in "Gone with the Wind" to James Dean, Marlon Brando and Elvis. L.L. Cool J says he wants to change the way white Middle America sees young black American males and to be the first black Middle American sex symbol. L.L.'s sexuality—tough, sweet, dangerous, sensitive—fits the cast of the white American sex symbol, an almost unattainable goal for a black male. L.L. Cool J knows the power of popular culture; he's that type of guy.

We find an empty studio for the interview. I ask him to sign my *Radio* CD. Then I give him a copy of our Ciccone Youth CD, *The Whitey Album*, seeing as how we sampled beats off his records. L.L. Cool J starts to laugh. "I got a CD in a couple of my cars," says L.L. "I'll play it."

Kim Gordon: What kind of cars you got?
I got a Benz, a BMW, an Audi, a Porsche.

Really? Shit, where do you keep them all?
At my house. "Wonderland." I call it that.

Do you spend much time there?

I just bought it, so I don't have any furniture yet. But I have the cars. Who's this girl? [He looks at a picture with a flyer for the Necros in the background on the insert from *The Whitey Album*.] It must have been a long time ago for it to say The Negroes.

That's the Necros, an early hardcore band. Are you familiar with the early hardcore scene?
Uh-uh, what is that, like heavy metal?

FUJI-RDPP

Richard Schickel



5



What about somebody like Madonna?
I think she's cool. She doesn't turn me on. Her music is cool.

I think she said something like there's so much that's horrible in the world that she just wants to make music for people to forget about it sometimes.
That's what I always say. Just have fun. Music is fun. That's why I don't get too political. Why do I always have to educate people? They have teachers for that. Why do I have to be a teacher? Oh, because I can reach the kids. Well, why can't I reach the kids and make them happy? Why do I have to be the guy that says, "This is your homework. This is what you have to do." Let a teacher, let a parent do that. Let another rapper do that. I do my thing.

All of a sudden all these rappers, they're so into this positive black—I mean, I believe in that strongly but at the same time, "Yo, man, Motherfuck that. Let's have some fun. Please." 'Cause fun is important, too. All work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy. My grandmother always told me that.

You know, everybody expects me to sit on television and talk about how I'm educating the black kids. Man, fuck that. This music I'm making isn't only for the black kids. The music I make is for everybody. Y'know what I mean. I'm black, and I'm proud to be black, and of course it has to be black first for me. My family's black. But my music isn't only for black people. "I'm That Type of Guy" isn't only for black people. My records are universal. For whoever wants to listen, I'm doing my thing, and I'm positive, and I inject a few messages along the way. Basically I want to have fun. That's it.

What do you think of mainstream corporate rock?
Like what?

Like Bon Jovi.
I like that. I think it's cool.

Why do you think it's cool?
I don't know. It sounds good. It has an obvious melody. Hardcore heavy metal doesn't have an obvious melody that you can pick up. Bon Jovi I can relate to. I like their albums, I really do. I bought both of their albums. *Slippery When Wet* and *New Jersey*. *Slippery When Wet* was better, but I like *New Jersey* too.

Have you ever heard of the Stooges?
No.

It's the band Iggy Pop came out of. He was considered the first real punk in 1968/69. When their first record came out people thought they were morons because Iggy was just writing about what it was like to be 18/19, white, living in Detroit with nothing to do. He was the first one to express a bratty street punk attitude for a lot of white kids.

I like Bon Jovi. I like the way Bon Jovi is always talking about how we're struggling and we're gonna be all right and make it. I like that. That's really cool.

What about older dudes from the past? How about Jimi Hendrix?
Oh yeah. "You Move Me... Look Out... Brang Brang Brang." Yeah. I like Jimi Hendrix. He was crazy. He was a trip.

No, not at all! It was basically kids talking to other kids. The Beastie Boys were part of that. I remember when they were a hardcore band. The Young and the Useless?

That was another band. The Beastie Boys had their same name when they were a hardcore band. Hardcore was so fast that if your ears weren't attuned to it you couldn't understand it. It wasn't meant for anyone outside the scene. Like rap music, some of it is so fast, unless you're familiar with the slang you can't get it. That's why so many people who were into hardcore listen to rap. It's something that excludes white mainstream culture. That's interesting. I never really knew anything about that.

Yeah, it's funny. Rick Rubin came out of that.
Yeah, Rick's smart.

But Rick is more into teenage metal which is hard to believe 'cause he used to be into much weirder stuff.
He's still around. Andrew Dice Clay is a funny motherfucker.

I saw him on TV once. He wasn't very funny.
Did they let him curse? 'Cause when he curses, when you listen to his tape, there's shit like, "When he was in the back of the classroom doing the old knucklefuck on the ole pisspump." He's a funny motherfucker.

Have you ever seen Richard Lewis? He's sort of a traditional complaining Jewish dude. He's so extreme that he's elevated to another level. He's almost psychotic.

Yo, Andrew Dice Clay is a funny motherfucker.

So, just how big do you wanna get?
I want to be as big as Michael Jackson and George Michael. Bigger than them.

It doesn't scare you being that big?
No. It turns me on.

What about women who are so into you as a sex object that they take a picture of you to bed with them and their boyfriends or husbands start freaking out?
It's not my problem. The guy has to have control over his woman. She has to have enough respect for you to know not to do those things. It's how you carry yourself.

Do you have an ideal woman?
Well, intelligence is a cliché to me. I like nice girls. It doesn't matter how they look, unattractive, attractive. I like a nice girl, y'know what I'm saying? I'm not gonna dig into your reputation. I don't want to know your reputation in the neighborhood. I'm going to treat you the way you carry yourself when you're around me. I like normal people. I'm normal. I'm not an adonis. I like normal people around me.

I think that's what turns people on. On your sleeve notes you say how you want to dispel the image white America has of young black men. There're certainly not many people in rock and roll dispelling the cliché of male performers. Springsteen is just kind of a traditional rock dude. He makes himself vulnerable which is what is appealing, I guess. There's a lot of power in doing what is normal.

I know what you mean. I'm just trying to make it right.

Are there any female sex symbols that you relate to?
Oh yeah, every day on the way to work.



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The Outsider

Matt Dillon has just done a low-budget art film, "Drugstore Cowboy."

At a crucial point in his career, the guy proves he can act. Really act.

When Matt Dillon began to prepare for his latest film, "Drugstore Cowboy," he called an old friend, a heroin addict who had been strung out for years, and asked his friend to show him the life. They drove around Harlem, copped works in Tompkins Square Park in New York's East Village, and talked about the innate neurosis of addiction. They never bought any dope, they just went through the routines. The friend would point and tell Dillon, "That guy just got off. That guy's copping." Combat during peacetime. They bought works, paraphernalia for shooting up. It took about two minutes.

When it came time for filming, according to William Burroughs, who plays a small part in the movie, "Matt got the part perfectly: the part of an addict who goes around burglarizing drug stores for narcotics."

In a health food restaurant in Manhattan, Matt Dillon paces restlessly, wearing his dark glasses indoors. He arrived early, while in psychology textbooks indicates passive aggression, but on this day seems more like good manners, an innocent attempt to do the right thing. He looks depressed. It's cocktail hour, but he orders fresh-squeezed orange juice. "Today," says Matt, "it's not one of my best days."

"Drugstore Cowboy" (based on an unpublished novel by prison convict James Fogle), a voyeuristic account of a group of misguided drug pioneers and their pharmaceutical exploits, portrays the 70s American drug subculture and one man's deliverance from it in surreal, fetishistic detail. The film is also a turning point in Matt Dillon's 10-year career. "It's definitely a black comedy," says director/cowriter Gus Van Sant, whose "Mala Noche" won the Los Angeles Film Critics Award for best independent/experimental feature. "Sometimes the comedy sort of goes away and comes back. It's like a Charles Addams sort of thing. Or maybe like 'Dr. Strangelove.'"

In 1979, when he was only 14, Dillon was plucked from his Westchester, New York, high school to star in "Over the Edge" as an alienated adolescent rebel running amok in a suburban planned community. He had never acted before, or even considered it, but a scout visiting the school picked him for his menacing good looks. "Over the Edge" set the tone for Dillon's subsequent roles: from half-witted school bully in 1980's "My Bodyguard" to troubled punk in Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 "Rumble Fish." While his name became a household word, he couldn't get out of his typecast, and his career stagnated. Since his last box office or critical success, the 1984 coming-of-age comedy, "The Flamingo Kid," all five of his films—"Target," "Rebel," "Native

Son," "The Big Town" and "Kansas"—have bombed. He has a lot riding on "Drugstore Cowboy."

"Oh, please don't tell me that," says Dillon, wiggling in his chair as his eyes dart around the room. He's cautious and nervous, almost frightening, like a caged cheetah. For years, a star before he was ready, he ran pretty fast and pretty wild; he'd be at every cool party and every cool club, more than drunk, with a cigarette hanging from his lower lip, mumbling an off-color crudity at a hopeful dish, but always leaving with the boys. "Give me a blowjob" was his idea of an introduction.

He's more private now, has his close friends like Mickey Rourke and former Clash manager Kosmo Vinyl as well as childhood buddies, goes to his favorite bars, and does things like attending the River City Reunion readings in Lawrence, Kansas, with William Burroughs and Allen Ginsburg. He's 25 now, with a taut strength that stretches the ribbed cuff of his polo shirt sleeve and a clearer vision of what lies ahead. "The film is risky," he concurs. "But risky because it isn't the kind of film everyone is going to make. It's a different kind of film, so in that way it's risky. On the other hand, it's not risky because it isn't a blockbuster. So it has to make money."

Because Dillon fell into his profession by chance, and fell into a dumb tough types because of his heavy brow and imprecise articulation, he hasn't been thought of as a serious actor. Even he has questioned his talent. "Oh yeah, all the time," he says. "Well, not all the time, sometimes. But where I know I'm capable, the industry doesn't have imagination or is afraid to take chances. Other people don't believe I can do a certain part, but I know I can do it. It's kind of frustrating and it starts to take a toll on your confidence. So you've got to kick yourself and say, 'It's not you.' You've got to beat yourself up a little bit."

"I figure right now, at this point in my career, I'm young. I can't worry about—I have to worry about making decisions because you just have to in this business, which is kind of a shame. At the same time, I realize, time is on my side."

After his recent flops, he was looking for a comedy, something like "The Flamingo Kid." But "Drugstore Cowboy" intrigued him because of its amoral approach to drug culture. "I think it paints a pretty honest picture of—each person's story is different, of course—the life of a junkie. It has been romanticized in some cases, in Lou Reed songs and books like *Junky* by Burroughs. But he's just writing about it, just telling it like it is. Drugs are taboo now, you know, drugs just are not hip. That's why I was nervous about doing this movie. But it's always going to come up, won't it? People love that man, people love running around with scum."

As Bob Hughes, the lead character in "Drugstore Cowboy," Dillon leads a small entourage of dope fiends in robberies of drug stores, always outwitting the police.

He is not quite a hero and not quite a villain; he's not sexy and he's not stupid; he's an obsessive who likes stealing more than drugs and has epiphanies rather than hallucinations; he's got a corrupt personality and a pure soul. The role takes advantage of the Matt Dillon typecast and, at the same time, destroys it.

When Dillon first read the script, he was suspicious of its humorous approach to such a grave subject. But after several more readings, a bit of introspection and a lot of research, he understood: the characteristics are funny and the characters are not.

"I just realized how sad it is, really, the fact that the rest of his life, this friend of mine I was telling you about, he's gonna have to struggle. He's walking a tightrope always. It's like your soul gets so stained that you can't ever really cleanse it. You can probably be a better and more intelligent and wiser person because of it, but you'll never have that purity again. You see people who are constantly struggling with it. I saw one guy at an AA meeting, this one kid, just off the street, he was homeless. He was young. He was sharing out. He was just trying to talk it out and share out. Tears in his eyes. Afterwards people make coffee, volunteer to clean up. And I saw this guy, he wanted so much to be able to clean up the room but it was too much for him. He didn't have it in his heart to pick up a piece of paper off the floor. In that way, I realized how sad it really is and I reinterpreted the script."

"I was haunted by it. I can be a pretty obsessive person; I'm not always, but when I am, I really am. Something will be on my mind all the time and that's what happened. I was very depressed before doing the film. I found that I started to get into that selfish, bad attitude, feeling sorry for myself thing, just like a junkie. I really got into it. One day, I just came home and started crying man. The only way I was able to free myself was when I did the movie."

Like Michael Jackson, Matt Dillon was robbed of part of his childhood and became a curiosity you could see but couldn't touch. So he's a little timid when someone comes around asking questions. But he finishes his grilled salmon, puts his linen napkin back up on the table and apologizes for being out of sorts. "Sometimes," he says, "I think I'm so bad at schmoozing. I just can't schmooze. I'm good at really honestly socializing, but if I feel like I'm schmoozing, I feel like a piece of shit. I love to talk to people, I'm very friendly, and I'm not going to compromise my own beliefs and my own lifestyle. I don't think you can be an actor and isolate yourself." ☼

Article by Christian Logan Wright

Photograph by Butch Belair



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- ☐ JANE IRIS BLOOM COLUMBIA
- ☐ TERRY LYNE SERVE FORECAST-POLYGRAM
- ☐ TRACY CHAPMAN ELEKTRA
- ☐ STEPA HAZA SIRE
- ☐ SIRE-WARNER BROS
- ☐ SIRE-WARNER BROS
- ☐ ROBBIE HAITT CAPTAN
- ☐ SANE
- ☐ EPIC
- ☐ MICHELLE SMOCKED MERCURY-POLYGRAM
- ☐ PATTI SMITH AVISTA
- ☐ TARITA TIKARAM REFUGE

MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

- ☐ BURNING SPEAR BLAZA
- ☐ ELVIS COSTELLO WARNER BROS
- ☐ YOUTE HUBBERT MANGO
- ☐ STANLEY JORDAN T.M. SAMSATIAN
- ☐ TYNE-LDC (DELICIOUS VINYL-ISLAND)

GROUP OF THE YEAR

- ☐ ANTHrax MEGAFORCE ISLAND
- ☐ AWAD MANGO
- ☐ ERIC B. & RAKIM
- ☐ INI CAMPER VAN BETHOVEN
- ☐ VIRGIN
- ☐ DUSTY TOWNS 4 A.D.-CAPITOL
- ☐ FEELIES
- ☐ METALLICA
- ☐ ELKTRA
- ☐ PUBLIC ENEMY DEF JAM
- ☐ R.E.M.
- ☐ WARNER BROS
- ☐ REPLACEMENTS
- ☐ SIRE-REFRUSE
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ GEFEN

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- ☐ AWAD *Distant Thunder*
- ☐ MANGO
- ☐ ERIC B. & RAKIM *Follow The Leader*
- ☐ UNI
- ☐ CAMPER VAN BETHOVEN *Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart*
- ☐ VIRGIN
- ☐ TRACY CHAPMAN *Tracy Chapman*
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ ELVIS COSTELLO
- ☐ SANE
- ☐ WARNER BROS
- ☐ METALLICA *And Justice For All*
- ☐ ELKTRA
- ☐ PUBLIC ENEMY *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold*
- ☐ DEF JAM
- ☐ R.E.M. *Up To Back*
- ☐ DEF JAM
- ☐ LEO RENO
- ☐ NEW YORK
- ☐ SIRE-WARNER BROS.

- ☐ R.E.M.
- ☐ WARNER BROS
- ☐ REPLACEMENTS *Don't Tell A Soul*
- ☐ SIRE-REFRUSE
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ PERSHORE
- ☐ GEFEN
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ DAYDREAM NATION
- ☐ BLAST FIRST-ENGINA
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ W.B.'s Too Good
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ BURNING SPEAR
- ☐ LIBERATION
- ☐ SHANACHIE
- ☐ XTC
- ☐ GORGES & LEMONS
- ☐ GEFEN

SONG OF THE YEAR

- ☐ BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE
- ☐ SPILL PLAY MUSIC
- ☐ COLUMBIA
- ☐ CAMPER VAN BETHOVEN
- ☐ "Eye Of Fatima Pt. 1"
- ☐ VIRGIN
- ☐ PUBLIC ENEMY
- ☐ "It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold"
- ☐ DEF JAM
- ☐ R.E.M.
- ☐ "Fast Car"
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ THE CULT
- ☐ "Fire Woman"
- ☐ SIRE-REFRUSE

- ☐ THE CURE "Fascination Street"
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS "She Drives Me Crazy"
- ☐ R.S. MCA
- ☐ PRIMITIVES "Crash"
- ☐ RCA
- ☐ R.E.M. "Orange Crush"
- ☐ WARNER BROS
- ☐ REPLACEMENTS
- ☐ "Drek-A-Bot"
- ☐ SIRE-REFRUSE
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ "Drek-A-Bot"
- ☐ GEFEN
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ "Love Will Tear Us Apart"
- ☐ CARLSON-RESTLESS
- ☐ W2
- ☐ "Desire"
- ☐ "The Mayor Of Simpleton"
- ☐ GEFEN

DEBUT

- ☐ BOB DABE & D.J. 2 ROCK
- ☐ PROFILE
- ☐ ERIC BRICKELL & NEW BOHEMIANS
- ☐ GEFEN
- ☐ TRACY CHAPMAN
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ CONVOY JUNKIES
- ☐ RCA
- ☐ B.D. SOUL
- ☐ TOMMY BOY
- ☐ HOUSE OF LOUIS
- ☐ CREATION RELATIVITY
- ☐ TERRY LYNE CAMERON
- ☐ VERVE FORECAST-POLYGRAM
- ☐ 4AD
- ☐ PRIMITIVES
- ☐ RCA
- ☐ THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
- ☐ CHRYSALIS
- ☐ MARCUS ROBERTS
- ☐ NOYUS-PCA
- ☐ GEFEN
- ☐ SMOUZE & THE BAKERSHEES
- ☐ ELEKTRA
- ☐ TARITA TIKARAM
- ☐ REFUGE
- ☐ TYNE-LDC
- ☐ DELICIOUS VINYL-ISLAND

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Golden Girl

On her first solo album, Surprise, Syd Straw drops the diva performance of her Golden Palominos days and lets her hair down for a pop hoedown.

Article by Rosemary Passantino

Photography by Jon Ragel

Singer/songwriter Syd Straw was born deaf. "I had some great hearing difficulties when I was a kid," she recalls. "I couldn't hear. It was difficult." The memory is clearly disturbing, but Straw can leave even the most distressing reminiscence with a punch line. "I can remember not hearing. I had an operation. After that, my mother says I was always singing, right from the crib." A trunk baby raised by actor parents, she combines an earthy allure with a sharp intuitive intellect. It makes sense that her restless drive, softened by a humble sense of wonder, would be rooted in a belated sensory awakening. "It sounds grandiose, I know, but I believe you can do anything. You are



given a certain set of circumstances. Some people aren't born into great situations. But they can do it, too. It's just harder. You've got to hold onto a little streak of optimism."

When Syd Straw moved to New York at age 19, she wanted to become an actress. "I never lasted at wait-res jobs, though. I was too busy working the room to be able to keep track of who got what plate." Making the rounds of New York nightclubs, she decided she could sing as well as anyone else, and abruptly shifted ambitions. Amateur nights led to singing backup for Pat Benatar and Van Dyke Parks. When drummer Anton Fier saw her with Van Dyke Parks he claimed not to be impressed, but not long after, he invited her to join his group, the Golden Palominos. "If you don't like the way I sing, why do you want me in your group?" asked Straw. Fier shrugged. "I guess he just liked my braids." On the power-pop art band's *Vision Of Excess* Straw's clarion backing vocals upstaged Michael Stipe's lead on "Boy (Go)." "Singing in the background position has always been just as important to me as taking the lead," she says. "It's like speaking some strange, private language." In the spotlight on "(Kind Of) True" and "Buenos Aires" she sounded at once clearheaded and passionately mystical; over-

night, she became alternative rock's favorite diva.

In a granny-print dress and green silk coat, a bright red wood cross swinging like a toy from a necklace of coiled yellow plastic, Syd Straw stands under the blue lights of the Bottom Line, tugging one of her trademark braids. Peering over her glasses at the sold-out crowd welcoming her back to New York City from Los Angeles, she looks a little misplaced. "Where have I been all my life?" she asks, her voice an equal measure of theatrical joshing and sincere stage fright. The drummer answers by hitting the snare, and at the first whap of rhythm, the cartoon wolf vanishes. In her place stands a strong-boned woman, exuberant behind the mike, singing "His Turn To Cry" in a voice as sweet and uplifting as fresh-brewed coffee perked with Tennessee whiskey.

"There's a greyhound lurking around back there with my name on it." One hand on a tilted hip (orphan lean, Straw is curvaceous in all the right places), she struts to the piano and hoists back a healthy shot of hard liquor. A deep Southern twang implodes her vowels, "I love it when life works out like that." The cowgirl confidence dispels as she nervously frites her hair, grinning. "Damn, I forgot to undo my braids.

It's my best gimmick." Beg to differ—aside from her talent, Syd Straw's finest trick is her ping-pong of sharp and vulnerable, mousy and ferocious. She dresses like Annie Hall, can play emotions like Daddy Warburck's red-haired moppet, but the Annie Syd Straw calls most clearly to mind is the one who got her gun.

For the Bottom Line gig, Straw has brought with her some of LA's finest talent, X drummer D.J. Bonebrake and ex-Blasters guitarist Dave Alvin. But Straw's personality, warm and enchanting, draws talent like honey draws bees. The unlikely roster on her first solo album, *Surprise*, includes Michael Stipe, Ry Cooder, John Doe, Peter Holsapple, Don Was and Anton Fier. Diane Keaton is directing Straw's next video.

"I don't hang around with lightweight," she comments later, her imperious gaze sparked with laughter. "I prefer people who can bring me up a notch or two. I like to be inspired." She says regarding *Surprise* (which she produced) was like dramatic casting: "For each song, I tried to assemble the most diverse group and compelling group of people, put them in a room together and just let everybody have a good time." The pop hootenanny ranges from "The Sphinx," a devilishly clever, meticulously metered collaboration with art rocker Peter Blegvad, to a remake of the dust-bowl classic "Hard Times," sung with John Doe, to "Almost Magic," a sweeping ballad which would topple into Barry Manilow sentimentality if Straw's overdubs didn't make it sound more like Laura Nyro's soulful collaborations with LaBelle. In spite of the supergroup ensembles, *Surprise* is clearly Straw's record, centered on a voice that shimmers somewhere between Cyndi Lauper, Annie Golden and Ann Magnuson.

Restless, Straw doesn't sit still easily. "I'm an explorer," she says. "If I had been born in an earlier time, I'm sure it would have been something like Lewis, Clark and Straw." Given travel carte blanche by Virgin, her album was recorded in seven different studios in the US and London, including Brian Eno's West Coast home recording den. The video for the first single, "String Of Pearls," was filmed in four locations: Hollywood, where Straw now lives, New York, where she spent nearly 10 years, Athens and Bakersfield. Last year she had her manager arrange a tour of the Eastern Block. Concerts in Czechoslovakia were followed by an appearance with a 60-piece Bulgarian orchestra that was broadcast to 500 million people living behind the Iron Curtain. She sang a Bulgarian folk song and Frank Sinatra's "All The Way." "Do you get the feeling I don't want to be pinned down?" she asks.

A calm intelligence, not always apparent behind the kooky gestures and cutting up, centers her kinesis. A self-taught singer, "obsessed with harmony," she listens avidly for novel vocal arrangements. She was an early fan of the Bulgarian State Women's Vocal Choir, and she lists "definitely anything Everly" among her influences. Without any notable experience behind the sound board, she convinced Virgin to let her produce *Surprise* by recording two songs with the Golden Palominos and presenting the label with the completed tracks. "They didn't think it was a good idea until they heard what I could do. I'm not a technical whiz, but I've spent enough time in studios to know the basics. I'm interested in the whole process of making music. I listen very intently." An amateur photographer, she was thrilled to see one of her "snapshots" printed in a small magazine. "It showed diversity. I don't want to get stuck in the mud. I want to expand," she pauses, a glimmer in her eye preceding the flash of wit, "not physically, of course." ☺

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Photos: Steve DePinto

In My Tribe

The Cult turn their obsessions—60s mysticism, 70s heavy metal and 80s style—into a bewitching head rush. Shrugging off the burden of history, they’ve become the kings of hard rock.

Article by Mat Snow

I an Astbury has been drinking. Searching for ecstasy and energy, onstage night after night in a 150-city tour, watching opening act Guns N’ Roses tear things up, Astbury has turned to the bottle, but tonight the bottle let him down. It is 1987, and Ian and the Cult are in Vancouver, British Columbia, playing furious heavy metal when Astbury sees security guards manhandling his fans. He decides to attack. Ian Astbury spends the night in jail, charged with three counts of assault. One of his 10 cellmates has blood pouring out of his head.

“I was playing with a bomb that exploded in my face and I was the one who suffered the consequences of the situation,” Astbury later told *Music Express*. The tour in support of *Electric* ended in Australia, where, in a fit of what they’ve described as road craziness, the Cult destroyed \$40,000 of equipment. “We lost our virginity. We really got broken,” said Astbury. “We got fucked by an elephant.”

Guns N’ Roses followed the road of excess to the top of the charts. The Cult followed it to LA, where they went to dry out. “He’s gone crazy, really crazy, trying to tame the American horse,” sings Astbury of that US tour on the new *Sonic Temple*. Goaded on by Billy Duffy’s guitar, Astbury follows the song’s triple entendre (the animal, the drug, the woman) over the edge, straight into the mythic realm where, out of time, rock elevates its stars and listeners to the status of gods. Recorded with Bob Rock (who produced Zep clones Kingdom Come and engineered Aerosmith and Bon Jovi), *Sonic Temple* may not out-*raunch Electric*, but it has the dark overtones which its predecessor lacked, echoing the exoticism of the Cult’s 1986 college radio hit, “She Sells Sanctuary.” Like Led Zeppelin, the Cult—especially Astbury—work hard at a flamboyant weirdness peculiar to the obsessive British fan of rock legend and lore.

And like Led Zeppelin 20 years ago, the Cult have cracked America with a sledgehammer rock’n’roll album and a killer show. “Almost by default we’re seen as the next contenders,” says Billy Duffy. Handsomely craggy, Billy (like Ian) is not your usual midget rock star. Even without his Staffordshire bull terrier Dave (recently put down), Billy looks able to handle himself in a tight spot. Where Ian is wary, having been mocked too often as pretentious by the British rock press to relax easily in interviews, Billy is forthright and jovial, an old-fashioned rocker and proud of it. He loves this life.

“Everyone wants a new band,” he says, “especially the industry. But our trouble is we’re not so easy to define as Guns N’ Roses—rock’n’roll to the hilt, girls, Jack Daniels, going to the big city and getting done over by the beast. It’s not exactly very deep, but kids relate to it. We’re not quite that one-dimensional, and so we’re harder to get into. We’re almost seen as a little bit Doors-y.”

“Thinking people’s rock music,” nods Ian (nicknamed “Ezekiel” by Billy on account of his witchfinder image) sagely. “Our lyrical content”—a favorite phrase—is a little more cerebral than Guns N’ Roses, a little more sensitive and more able to relate experiences in a more textual way—which is pretty hard for a lot of people to digest.”

“There’s just a slight dark feel to us,” insists Billy (nicknamed “Nightrider” by Ian on account

Photography by Fran Collin



Ian Astbury.



The Cult (l-r): drummer Matt Sorum, bassist Jamie Stewart, vocalist Ian Astbury and guitarist Billy Duffy.

of his womanizing, only recently curbed by the threat of AIDS). "Because we're English we're considered weird."

"The stigma of the English eccentric," sighs Ian.

Straightfaced, with a piercing stare, scrubby russet beard and center-parted drapes of clashing blue-black hair, Ian Astbury has the great gift of taking himself dead seriously while giving the impression of healthy self-mockery. From the crown of his skull-and-crossbones Confederate hat to the toes of his biker boots, this ringed and inverse-crucified vision in Bible-black is the heavy-duty "Gimme Shelter" rock star incarnate.

Seven years ago, with equal conviction, Astbury called himself Ian Lindsay (after his late mother's maiden name) and sported a Mohawk haircut, nose ring and a mish-mash of anarchist-punk and American Indian clothing. Ian does not just play his part, he becomes it; his self-mythologizing goes beyond mere attitude. Through all the changes—from Southern Death Cult to Death Cult to Cult, from goth to neo-pynchellia to cock-rock—there have been constants: Ian's fascination with Red Indians; his conviction that civilization was raping and fencing Mother Earth and upsetting the whole mystic natural order; and his personal conviction that he has a pre-

ordained place in the spotlight, that deep down he is, like the song says, a Sun King.

Lizard King Jim Morrison—who once said that the spirits of American Indians killed in a road accident he witnessed as a child in New Mexico "just landed in my soul"—might recognize a kindred spirit in Ian Astbury, someone who, like Morrison, was uprooted as a child. And someone who would likewise grow up yearning to be adored—and respected—by the teenagers who treated him as a weirdo when he was a kid.

There are parallels in the way we were brought up," agrees Ian. His Northern English accent is very different from the American-style rock-speak he uses onstage. "My father was in the Merchant Navy"—Morrison's was a Rear Admiral in the US Navy—"and we traveled a lot. He was determined that I would have things which he didn't. He was a painter and fancied himself as a poet as well, but my grandfather had turned around and said it wasn't a proper trade. So he went to sea, because it was romantic to go to the Ivory Coast or Brazil. He tried to relay these experiences to me; so I didn't get a football, I got paintbrushes and a palette. He bought me a guitar which I broke after five minutes, trying to do a Townshend. He was constantly encouraging me, which was cool.

"I didn't have Morrison's anti-parent thing. I became more aware very quickly of something more

than nine-to-five, because I was being constantly shifted around. I was always objective, always on the outside looking in. I would go into new towns and know what the score was immediately with kids in the playground. I spent a lot of time on my own, and hanging out with the eccentric, outlaw kids at school."

That word "eccentric" again. Ian draws a straight line between today's rock god and his snotty-nosed kid self.

"I've always been a clothes horse," says Ian Astbury, chuckling. "The first memorable thing I ever did was when I was about 10; I put blue food coloring into my hair because I was really into Bowie. Fashion is a very English thing. I remember 11-year-old kids in Ben Sherman shirts—it had to be Ben Sherman—your waistband had to be only so thick, the flare just so, the parallels creased perfectly, the platform shoes and wedgies just right. Like, when we made the Love album in 1985, a lot of the clothes I was wearing were influenced by Brian Jones, one of the snappiest dressers ever."

"And I wanted to look like the guitarists of the Stooges on their first album sleeve—leather trousers and an Iron Cross," adds Billy Duffy. "In Britain people will dress up to go to a concert; if it was Roxy Music they'd dress like Bryan Ferry. In America they don't adopt rock stars in that way; music is just one more part of life. In Britain, people get into it down to the minutest detail. Every school had a Rod Stewart or Bowie clone."

"America's very much more leisure-orientated, jeans and T-shirts; you just burn around," Ian notes with regret. Fortunately, in fashion-crazy Europe, rock is "almost trendy."

"You pick up *Vogue* magazine and you'll see designers like Martine Sibson whose clothes are completely based on the kind of rock stuff that I wear," Ian observes. "And the slant of people like Gaultier is a highly stylized rock'n'roll look. One of the things about us is that we're not generic rockers—bouffant hairdos, spandex and lipstick. There's a finer attention to detail. That's one thing I really like about the English; our attention to detail in our musical influences. We really go the whole fucking hog. We don't have the malls and all that shit to hang out in like American teenagers have got. I remember when I was an American teenager, there were always places to go—bowling, discos, shopping centers. Growing up in Britain there was nothing to do, so you spent a lot of time thinking and buying the genuine article."

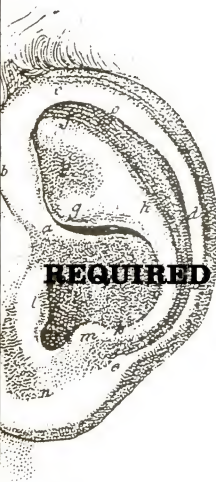
"My first experience after emigrating to Canada, to Hamilton, Ontario, when I was 11 was at my first playtime," he continues. — "There was a Mohawk Indian kid dressed in denim with hair down to his arse, and I'm in my Slade socks and flared trousers. He said, 'Hey man, do you guys in England smoke pot?' 'What's pot?' Ha, ha, ha! There were all these 11-year-old kids smoking pot and listening to Alice Cooper cranked up high on a cassette player. 'Wow,' I thought, 'these guys are great—they don't give a shit!' I preferred hanging out with those kind of people, and over a period of time I got hotter at translating life experiences into—"yes—"lyrical content."

"I would do stupid things. I would prefer throwing myself through a plate-glass window than drinking beer with all the other 15-year-olds. I'd always come home covered in blood through having crawled through barbed wire—I don't know why; I just wanted experience." Legend has it that Ian was hit by cars at 11 and 16. When he was 8 he had a steel spike inserted into his leg after he fell playing in a quarry. The same day he had to have stitches after falling off a bus.

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"In Canada there was a gang of us kids who were always put down. There was a load of Asian and Jamaican kids, English immigrants and American kids. We'd hang around together and vandalize things. I felt more at home with them than the run-of-the-mill kids; I didn't like them, I didn't like their values and I didn't like their music. When the Pistols came along that was it: I totally identified. I went over to England and went party."

In Canada Ian had joined the Army Cadets ("the only place where I could meet other British kids") where he'd walk around camp "in my flares, beige pullover and this big Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament badge." He disliked regimentation, but he received praise in training. When Ian was 16, the Asbury family returned to Britain so that his mother, terminally ill with cancer, could die with her family in Scotland. In the grieving aftermath, Ian joined the army.

"It was also because I was stuck in Glasgow and it was so gray and horrible, no work anywhere—they wouldn't even let me into art school!" he recalls. "I didn't join the army with a view to kill; I just wanted a trade, to be a helicopter pilot. I thought it was garbage and left after 10 days. It made me grow up with a bang. I realized I had to get my shit together. I worked for my family and helped them get back to Canada. Then I went on the road myself, like Jack Kerouac with a rucksack on my back, sleeping in train stations, anywhere I could. Basically I was following bands round the country, people like Billy Idol, Adam and the Ants, Killing Joke. There was a pack of 15 or 20 kids I saw at all these shows, and we all hung out and hitched together. I ended up for some reason in Bradford and completely freaked out. That was the beginning of the band."

An anarchist-punk into Crass and Poison Girls, Ian found himself in a squat variously occupied by the cream of Bradford's leftist punk scene: Slade the Leveller of New Model Army, his girlfriend, punk-poetess Joolz, and "ranting poet" (now *New Musical Express* journalist) Steven Wells. A local band that practiced in the basement asked Ian to join. After a few gigs, word in Bradford was that this new band was hot, and the local TV station turned up to film a show. They hadn't settled on a name, and had to choose one in a hurry. Southern Death Cult was born.

Asbury met Billy Duffy when Southern Death Cult opened for Duffy's band Theater of Hate, whose singer was Kirk Brandon. Along with Bauhaus, TOH were the biggest act in Britain's exploding goth scene on the strength of their hit single "Do You Believe In The Westworld." "I gravitated to Billy," Ian explains, "because he was brought up the way I'd wanted to be. I remember when I was about 15 sitting in my room in Canada playing all my old records to try to recreate an English environment."

In poignant contrast to Asbury, Billy Duffy comes from a very settled solid Northern working-class family. "My father's still a bricklayer. Miraculously they were supportive of me wanting to be a musician. On my mother's side of my family there was a male dancer who worked in Paris and Las Vegas, and my mother liked amateur dramatics so there was a little seed there. When I was 15 my father was really confused, but now on the phone yesterday he said, 'That Fire Woman' is the best song you've written. Definitely.' I'm lucky they had the foresight."

In 1983, Duffy split Theater of Hate to join Ian in the newly-formed Death Cult, which lasted for less than a year and recorded only five songs; in '84 they became simply the Cult. "We got on from the first time we



Ian and Billy. When they were teenagers, Ian wanted to be Bowie and Billy wanted to be Ron Asheton from the Stooges.

met," Billy recalls. "We've been like best mates ever since Southern Death Cult and Theater of Hate. I was like an alienated Northerner who'd moved to London. I was enjoying life."

"Theater of Hate was almost by accident: I got into that band through Boy George! 'You play guitar, don't you?' You've got a quiff like the Stray Cats, the White Socks and the Robot Shoes—meet Kirk Brandon!" continues Billy. "Johnny Marr's come out of the same thing. He used to come up to rehearsals of my school-boy band because Andy Rourke, the Smiths' bass player, went to my school. He was a year younger than me, and in the same band as I was when I decided to be a punk, link up with Slaughter and the Dogs and move to London in '79. They stayed in Manchester, and Johnny's guitar playing stems from being into stuff like Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and Fleetwood Mac, believe it or not. He's from exactly the same working-class Manchester background as I am, and he linked up with Morrissey who I'd been in a band with."

Billy Duffy and Morrissey!!?

"The last time I actually saw Steve Morrissey was when he and Johnny Marr were walking up Wardour Street in London one way and Ian and I were walking down the other. Johnny Marr said hello, and Morrissey didn't. For a long time he's hated my guts; I think he thinks we ripped off a lot of his stuff because he was going to be the singer in this band following Slaughter

and the Dogs, this mini Manchester punk rock band that moves to London. We were in a band together called The Nosebleeds, a derivative of Ed Banger and the Nosebleeds. I met him when he was president of the New York Dolls Fan Club; he was lobbying the BBC to show the Dolls. Me and my mates were totally obsessed with the Dolls and Iggy and everything New York circa 1974; we used to get this magazine, *New York Rocker*. It was a pretty small scene. Morrissey wrote reams of lyrics and I wrote a couple of songs with him."

"Years later when I went home, the Smiths were the most hated band in Manchester. Morrissey was considered a freak; slightly effeminate, very intellectual, very cutting in his remarks—not a person to bandy words with. The Morrissey you see is what he is. And for some reason he hates my guts. I really like Johnny: he's a fine guitar player and very down to earth. All we really wanted to be was rock stars; it's the old dream."

Listening now to the uptight early goth of Theater of Hate or Southern Death Cult's 1982 "Moya"/"Fatman" single, it's hard to imagine the strutting, arena-sized rock star machismo of today. Even the distance between '85's *Love*, compared to the likes of the Cure (albeit with budding Led Zep epic fantasies), and its Electric successor is one hell of a leap.

"The Beatles started off as a bunch of greasers playing Buddy Holly covers, and the Rolling Stones took a long time to become what we remember as *The Roll-*

ing Stones," counters Billy. "But what's happened in Britain in the 80s is that a lot of budding bands have had instant success, like Southern Death Cult; and the downside is that you're competing before you really know what the fuck you're doing."

"You've got to remember we came from a scene after punk was definitely dead and buried, yet there were all these punks who'd learned to play and were trying to find a new form of music," he continues. "Like, we had to get rid of our first drummer—he could play nothing but burundi tom-toms because Bow Wow Wow were happening. It was a search for something new to call your own. There just happened to be a load of people the same age who formed bands about the same time—Sisters of Mercy, Bauhaus, Theatre of Hate, Southern Death Cult."

Now that the Cult align themselves with Guns N' Roses and Soundgarden, it's ironic to recall that Ian and Billy came up with the punk movement, whose First Commandment was Thou Shalt Not Headbang.

"That's exactly what happened with me and my mates when we were 15, 16," Billy laughs. "When the Pistols played in Manchester, half a dozen of us went down to see them and it split the gang; half the kids walked out and half stayed. It was that simple. I was trying to play guitar at that time for a local band, and I thought punk was brilliant. What everybody hated back then was that bands like Zeppelin designed to play Knebworth (an annual UK festival) once every three years if they felt like it; they just weren't available. The bands I can remember just before punk were Be-Bop Deluxe, Dr. Feelgood, Eddie and the Hotrods, Thin Lizzy, Uriah Heep—they were on the road, playing. One night I saw Uriah Heep at the Manchester Free Trade Hall and then went across the road to see Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers at Rafter's. Punk became a whole popular culture and the metalheads became those long-haired spotty geezers that went drinking at certain pubs."

After Euro-synth, funk, psychedelia, rockabilly, burundi, jazz and country, punk finally had to break its golden rule and rip off heavy rock.

"Punk was the original springboard for everybody to rob from the past," Billy reckons. "People dumped on us for being the 70s revival. A lot of bands were so concerned with being hip that they weren't being themselves."

"Being themselves" meant a considerable risk for the Cult back in 1987. When they abandoned *Love's* swirling goth for the all-out swagger of *Electric*, they put their growing post-punk popularity on the line—with no guarantee the metalheads would go for it either. But Ian and Billy knew deep inside they would have to come out of the rock closet.

"When we came out with the *Love* album in America, we got embraced by college radio, Anglophile fans who would also be into Bauhaus, New Order, the Smiths, early U2, Simple Minds, Echo and the Bunnymen," Billy recalls. "The Cult were another English band, a slightly heavier version of the jangly guitar. So immediately you eliminated all the rock'n'roll fans; they're just not interested in that scene. *Electric* lost us a lot of fans who were really into that kind of music, but broadened our appeal. Radio started playing us alongside AC/DC, Guns N' Roses and Led Zeppelin. "When *Electric* came out I imagined mass suicides of Birmingham goths, leaping off the top of the Bullring!" he cackles. "That's why we did the video for 'Love Removal Machine' with wall-to-wall Marshall amps, denim and leather—we booted the closet door down!"

"We knew what we were doing," smiles Ian evily.



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Do the Right Thing

A fight between friends became a media circus when Public Enemy's Professor Griff aired anti-Semitic hatred even he doesn't believe. He must be on the pipe, right? It may be the end of the most innovative and influential group of the late Eighties.

Article by John Leland

Photograph by Glen E. Friedman

It was a horror movie, evil descending on a New York summer that had begun with a brutal gang-rape in Central Park and a tabloid sideshow of black suspects rapping Tone Loc's "Wild Thing" in their cell. As the Supreme Court dismantled affirmative action, quietly inflaming the center of American racial tensions, there was madness on the periphery. A black man with ties to Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam clamored, "The Jews are wicked, and we can prove this"; and a young black reporter, a liberal in the employ of Reverend Sung Myung Moon's right-wing newspaper chain, bolstered his career by circulating and multiplying the hatred he found so repugnant. Outside the posh Ziegfeld Theater on 54th Street in Manhattan, dozens of Jewish militants chanted, "We hate Public Enemy! We hate Public Enemy!" while inside, on the soundtrack to a movie some white critics called an incitement to race riot, Public Enemy rapped, *Elvis was a hero to most/But he never meant shit to me/He's straight out racist/That sucker was simple and plain/Motherfuck him and John Wayne.*

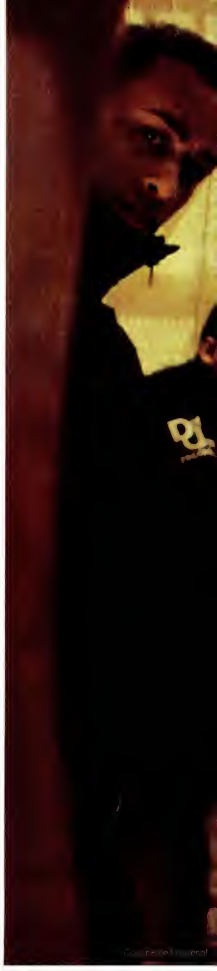
There were death threats and lies, a militant 27-year-old accountant whose past battle cry still hung in the air: "Louis Farrakhan [has] no right to talk, no right to walk, no right to live." At the Slave Theater in Brooklyn, Al Sharpton rallied blacks against Jewish pressure on Public Enemy. There was a troubling symmetry: Public Enemy's logo of a black man in a rifle sight on one side, and the JDO's logo of a machine gun in a Star of David on the other; and the chic allure of Uzi submachine guns on both.

At the root of the frenzy there was not evil, just mundane human error: four friends from suburban Long Island, whose routine intermecine squabbling, once it got away from them, had gotten way, way out of hand. A few commonplace mistakes, made by young men under great duress, had started it all.

"Did you know that the black rap group Public Enemy are anti-Semitic?"

Those were the first words you heard if you called the Jewish Defense Organization's New York office in June. In a month of intense turmoil and confusion surrounding Public Enemy, this taped message remained one of the few constants. The status of the crew and its members has been changing day to day, but at press time, here's how things stood: following a barrage of anti-Semitic remarks by Minister of Information Professor Griff in the *Washington Times*—and subsequently reprinted in the *Village Voice*—Public Enemy is taking an indefinite hiatus. This followed public statements that Griff would remain in the group but be stripped of his title (June 19); that he had been fired (June 21); and that Public Enemy had disbanded (June 22). For a number of reasons, lead rapper and writer Chuck D. has refused to stand by his colleague, and refused to disown him. In the course of two weeks, Chuck D. said that Griff was his close friend of 20 years, and that they had never been friends, just professional associates, with Griff his subordinate. Criticized from all sides, and wanting—according to one of his associates and close friends—to be liked by everyone, Chuck D. made the only decision he could: no decision.

In practice, this may mean the end of the most innovative and influential group of the late Eighties. College graduates and proud, adults in a genre dominated by teenagers, Public Enemy have changed the way hip hop sounds, the way it is made, what it does. "Chuck might talk 50 percent of his show—and win," says Daddy-O of the rap band Stetsasonic. "Even if the kids don't know they want to hear it, cause a lot of times they don't know they want to hear it. And I don't mean talk and lose, I mean talk and win. Talk and win and then go in the back. And then come back out and then win, and just leave the audience devastated and leave







(l-r): Brother Mike, Chuck D, Terminator X, Brother James, Flavor Flav, Professor Griff (turning away). Once things went awry, all damage control measures [just poured fuel on the fire. Finally the molotov was out of the band's hands, and it crushed them.

the venue." The group has spoken in a dozen prisons and hundreds of schools across the country, combining activism and self-promotion in a blueprint for the next wave of black rappers. As Bill Stepney, former vice president of Def Jam and a close adviser of the group says, in what might as well be Public Enemy's motto, "The revolution will be marketed."

In aesthetic terms, as a work of art, the current condition of sustained instability is the apotheosis of all Public Enemy has strived for. It is the hour of chaos extended indefinitely. But this time Chuck D. is the target of his own campaign.

Griff's remarks capped a year of internal unrest. Last summer, in interviews with the English press, he had repeatedly hurled vicious slurs at Jews, whites and gays. He became the trade's easiest mark: ask him a question and he would deliver great copy, some of it—not all—doctrine from Farrakhan's Nation of Islam.

It launched a tense but interesting relationship between the group and the press. Journalists who found Griff's remarks deeply offensive gave him a platform to offend as many people as possible, printing hateful sentiments that were not found in Public Enemy's music, nor in Nation of Islam doctrine. It was like Lenny Bruce's 1964 obscenity trial, where, according to Bruce, the prosecution took pleasure in saying the word "cocksucker" as they condemned Bruce for his use of it; everybody enjoyed playing with fire. The group protested that Griff's words were taken out of context. In separate interviews, when asked to explain Griff's statement, "If the Palestinians took up arms, went to Israel and killed all the Jews, it'd be alright," Griff and Chuck D. each put the words into a context which removed their sting. The two contexts, however, were entirely different.

But the bile stayed largely overseas. The group closed ranks, and Griff did no more interviews. When Greg Tate cited some of Griff's remarks in the *Village Voice*, Chuck D. denounced Tate as a "porch nigger." From a New York stage, which he held like Hamburger Hill from an irate Daddy-O of Stetsasonic, Chuck D. lashed into his English critics, calling them blue bloods afraid of the intermingling of the races at Public Enemy shows. Last July, I asked Chuck D. if he backed Griff's statements. He said that to him, "Jews are just white people, there ain't no difference," and seconded Griff's homophobia. Moreover, though, he said, firmly, "I back Griff." This became the Public Enemy line: not to let white outsiders divide and conquer them, as had happened with so many radical black organizations. Ignoring reality—as is his habit, according to a colleague—Chuck D. built a strategy and a loud rhetoric on the premise that Public Enemy was united. This was anything but the case.

Inside the group, dissent was brewing. Public Enemy's relationship with Columbia (Def Jam's parent label), tentative in the best of times, became more than distant. When the group's near-platinum second album, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, failed to yield hit singles despite steady sales, members felt themselves victims of Columbia's benign neglect. Some blamed Griff's remarks for the disaffection.

There were strong outside pressures on everybody. For all his business acumen, Chuck D. had entered into a 1986 partnership by which the group received only one quarter of its royalties, a throwback to the unbalanced contracts of race music. So there was little money coming in. Even though the group's debut album, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, sold 400,000 copies, and the follow-up better than twice that, Chuck D. had to take a temporary day job at \$300 a week to support himself and his wife.

Everything was new to the group members. They were elevated not just to the level of pop stars but to the level of black leaders, a status Chuck D. had courted without being prepared for it. He was also starting a family, juggling a heavy tour schedule with the demands of a pregnant wife and, after October of 1988, a daughter, Dominique. Griff separated from his own wife and moved in with his mother. At the same time, Chuck D. was trying to launch his own label and production company with Stepney and producer Hank Shocklee, the fourth player in this story. By the spring of 1989, when the interview appeared in the *Washington Times*, the three were negotiating seriously with MCA.

James Hank Boxley gave his first party when he was in the ninth grade. He and a friend from down the block, Richard Griffin, were the DJs. "It was about 1973 or '74," he says. "All I remember is everybody had the crazy big afros and platform shoes." A tall, lanky 31-year-old dressed for Friday night in a black turtle-neck and a small gold cross, Hank Shocklee—also as he now calls himself—is Chuck D.'s closest friend and business associate.

As a high school student in Roosevelt, Long Island, Shocklee threw his first professional party with money his mother gave him to buy a yearbook and a class ring. "No one came to the party," he remembers. "I had to explain to my mother what happened to the money she gave me." After the party, Carlton Ridenhour, two years younger than Shocklee, approached him and explained why it had failed. "He said he did fliers," Shocklee remembers, "and told me I didn't understand the science of fliers. I didn't want to hear about it." Ridenhour, now Chuck D., had a marketing scheme even then.

As Shocklee continued to throw parties with his brother and Griffin—now Professor Griff—Chuck D. joined as promoter and sometimes MC. His first performance was a hyped-up announcement for a party at the Black Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity house at Adelphi University, where he was by then an art student. They all formed Spectrum City sound system, and began booking top hip hop acts from the Bronx and Manhattan. In 1979, Griff dropped out of music to form a martial arts school and Islamic study group, Unity Force, which later became the Security of the First World, or S1Ws. According to Chuck D., "Hank Shocklee was the Afrika Bambaataa of Long Island. He started it all. When we threw affairs, Griff would have guys dressed up like Black Panthers, or FOI [Fruit of Islam], with the berets. And never once did we have one incident. Not because these guys would wax your ass; they earned respect and they treated people with respect. [The S1Ws] all had the same look about them. It was order." The S1Ws also brought the requisite muscle. At one time in the mid-Eighties, there were close to 300 members.

Bill Stepney, a DJ at Adelphi's radio station, WBAA, asked to interview Shocklee (then at nearby Hofstra University) and Chuck D. on the air. "It was a pretty strange time," says Stepney. "You had me, Chuck, Andre Brown [now Doctor Dre of the Original Concept and a host of "Yo! MTV Raps"] and Harry Allen [then host of a radio show who makes a cameo on Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype"] all in the same classroom. And everybody hated us." Chuck D. joined the station and got his own three-hour show. He gave the first half of it to his most frequent and enthusiastic caller, a neighbor of Shocklee's named William Drayton. Drayton—now Flavor Flav, Public Enemy's second rapper—used his hour and a half to



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play nothing but crazy homemade tapes of himself.

"Let's talk about something else, let's talk about basketball," says Chuck D., loud, always loud, over the telephone, in the middle of the crisis, a week after announcing that he had disbanded the group. "What happened to Karl Malone and Utah?" A devotee of Motown and, according to Shocklee, nothing else except rap, Chuck D. went to his first hip hop jam by accident in 1976. It was at a public park, half of which was used for the party. He played basketball in the other half. "I'm a sports motherfucker," he says. "I used to say, 'I don't give a fuck about music or the golden rule party, give me the beats, the Knicks, the jets, and I'm straight.'" There is a boys club element to the friendships in Public Enemy. "Griff used to play on my team when our street played other streets," says Shocklee. "All of us are into sports, except Bill bowls. Sports and music. We never talk about our personal lives or religion or anything. Even when the problems started, it was never anything personal, because like I said, we never got personal."

By 1989, the relationship between Chuck D. and Griff became to change. Public Enemy was playing huge arenas, with security provided largely by beefy off-duty policemen and -women. Griff, who neither wrote nor rapped, became less essential to the crew, and his past trappings in the press and the risk of their recurring—made him a potential liability.

The group began to pull apart. "From the start," says Stephney, "the basic operation of the group as a business was incorrect. There simply was no real delegation of authority. Duties were not clearly defined, and communication was not clear. And the group members themselves were trying to handle the business end. It was literally anarchy. The guys didn't talk to each other. Being on the road basically since '87, the band became very insulated. They developed factions, different loyalties." When Griff became road manager and got a pay raise, he and the 51Ws stopped talking to each other. The group held a meeting at which Shocklee and others talked to Griff about his ego. As the organization crumbled, Griff and Chuck D. had a basic clash of styles. Griff demanded order; Chuck D. thrived on chaos.

"Griff was supposed to be Minister of Information," says Shocklee, "but he wasn't allowed to do interviews. He was supposed to be the road manager, but he wasn't allowed to manage."

Griff was seething. Though Chuck D. declares himself, on the single "Don't Believe the Hype," a "follower of Farrakhan," Griff was always much better versed in the teachings of the Nation of Islam, and resented being gagged for interviews. He felt that his role as Minister of Information was to set an agenda for the group, and Chuck D. was stifling him. Griff constantly gave Chuck D. books to read, but the rapper—more kamikaze than theorist or student—never read them; Griff saw this, according to insiders, as Chuck D. turning his back on the truth. At the same time, says Stephney, "We were all deeply aware of the severity of the comments in the English press, and the grave potential consequences of Griff talking to the press. That's why you didn't see any interviews for a year."

People with outside interests in the group urged Chuck D. to fire Griff. Russell Simmons, who heads both Def Jam and Rush Artist Management (but does not manage Griff), denounced Griff as a "racist stage prop"; other Rush staff referred to Griff as poison. Griff soon abandoned his role as tour manager, furious at the lack of organization within the group.

Either on his own or with the consent of the group,

Griff started doing interviews. He appeared on Barry Farber's national radio program and on the "Evening Exchange" television show, aired on Washington's Channel 32 on April 13. On the latter, when asked why he does not wear a lot of gold like some other rappers, Griff said, "I think that's why they call it jewelry, because the Jews in South Africa, they run that thing."

Then came the Washington Times interview.

It was an accident, really. Never good at keeping appointments, and habitually juggling more plans than he can handle, Chuck D. arranged to meet reporter David Mills at the cafeteria of the Comfort Inn in Washington's Chinatown on May 9, the day of Public Enemy's second consecutive gig at the 9:30 Club. According to Mills, the rapper had also scheduled a radio interview for the same time, and could not meet with him. Chuck D. later told RJ Smith of the *Village*



Professor Griff was Public Enemy's freelance scholar. He thought he should set an agenda for the band. Chuck D. didn't agree.

Voice, "I refused to talk to this motherfucker. . . I'm not doing no fucking Washington Times interview." (The Washington Times is a Mookiee paper.) Given Chuck D.'s subsequent relationship with Mills, which was rocky but not silent, this seems like a rationalization made after the fact, when Chuck D. realized, to his embarrassment, that his radical group was falling apart because he had tried to promote it, and thus laid it open to attack, in a right-wing daily. When Chuck D. gathers a head of steam, associates admit, he sometimes makes things up as he goes along.

After Chuck D. left the cafeteria, someone directed Mills to Griff. The two talked for about 40 minutes—during which time Mills found his interviewee disarming—before Mills popped the Jewish question. "It was like pulling the lid off," Mills says. On demand, Griff launched into the rant that became nearly all of the Times story, as previous rants had eclipsed any thing else he might have said in past interviews. Among other slurs, Griff blamed Jews for "the majority of wickedness that goes on across the globe," citing as one of his sources white supremacist Henry Ford's *The International Jew*. According to Mills, even

the Times' Jewish photographer was charmed by Griff during the interview.

Just over five feet tall and strikingly handsome, Richard Griffin has a reputation for being exceedingly charming and polite or rude, according to his whims. For all his intensity, Griff has the sense of humor and boyish fun that Chuck D. lacks. In his Dapper Dan bootleg designer baseball jacket, with his name in big, gold capital letters across the back, he looks like anything but the ideological monster of his interviews.

At first glance, Griff is Public Enemy's sideshow attraction, a propagandist agitating in service of a savvy marketing strategy. He leads his uniformed 51Ws on stage in martial dance routines before the rappers, and pumps the crowd up for Chuck D. and Flavor Flav; he keeps a microphone throughout the show, while the 51Ws point plastic Uzis at the audience.

In another sense, Griff is Public Enemy. The 51Ws, as Unity Force, existed well before the group. In their berets, camouflage uniforms and combat boots, the 51Ws gave Public Enemy its identity as forcefully as Chuck D.'s lyrics or logo—a homeboy in a rifle sight, which he fashioned after getting his degree in graphic design. Kapping in an anachronistic baritone voice, Chuck D. shed messages that, by his own admission, much of his potential audience could never understand. "When I say, 'Farrakhan's a prophet and I think you ought to listen' [on "Bring the Noise"], he told me, 'kids don't challenge the fact that Farrakhan's a prophet or not. Few of them know what a prophet is.'" The 51Ws, by contrast—militant black men armed with machine guns, unity and information—spoke a simple visual message that any black kid could understand. Especially in the early days, before Chuck D. developed as a performer, Griff and the 51Ws also gave the group an element of rock'n'roll theater that set it apart from other rap crews.

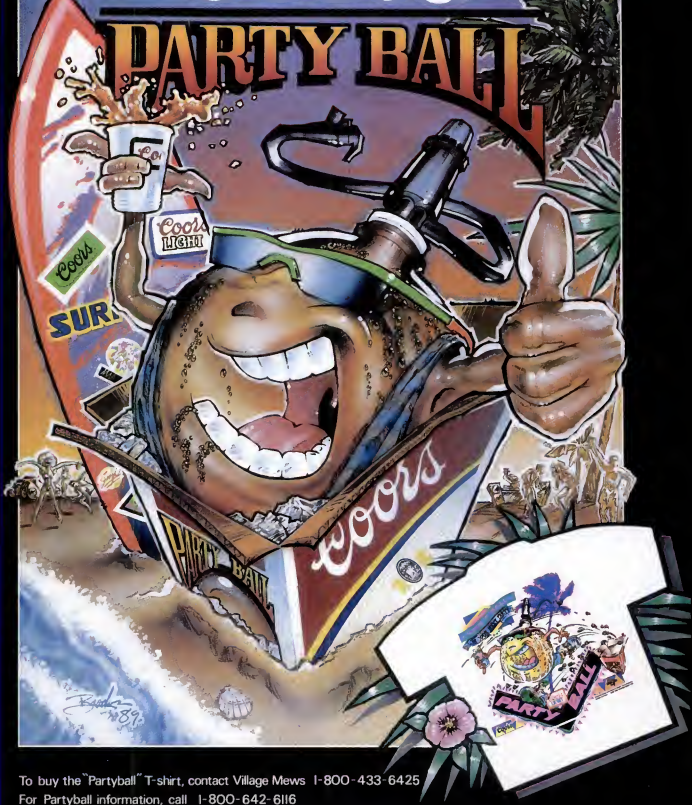
It is also possible, if willfully perverse, to construe Chuck D. as Griff's mouthpiece. Chuck D. has the enormous talent, as a rapper, lyricist, marketing strategist—and perhaps most importantly, in the long run—as a young black entrepreneur. But Griff has the information, or at least some information. His job as Minister of Information, as he defined it in a November 1988 interview arranged in secret from the rest of the group, is to undertake "a re-education of black people," drawing on the teachings of "Malcolm, Mao Zedong, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Winnie Mandela, Nelson Mandela, and Minister Farrakhan." According to Chuck D., "Flavor is what America would like to see in a black man—said to say, but true, Griff is very much what America would not like to see. And there's no acting here: sometimes I can't put Flavor and Griff in the same room." Chuck D. described his own role to me as "an interpreter and dispatcher" of information, and called the enticing side of Public Enemy—the hyperinvented music and wordplay—bait for the ideological hook.

Griff and Chuck D. disagreed on whose ideology was the hook. "I build people's identities one at a time," says Chuck D. "That's how we keep the group developing. First it was Flavor. I put a long time into his character. Then it was Terminator X. Third was Griff. On the second album, I gave him the title Minister of Information. I brought him out last year in Europe, gave him his first interviews. I knew it was gonna be some fire, but I stood by him every inch of the way. People always ask what that means, Minister of Information. He had to be something. Like Flavor's the Cold Lamer. In the next year, I was gonna bring out

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each of the SIWs, give them each their own identity."

In the 13 days between the *Washington Times* interview and the May 22 issue in which it ran, Shocklee urged Chuck D. to talk to Mills and get him to reshare the story, but Chuck D. declined.

On May 26, Mills faxed his story to *Rolling Stone* and *SPIN*, and the *Washington Times* publicist sent it around the country. The Unification Church reprinted the story on the front page of its May 29 *New York* paper. Chuck D. handled this problem as he had the others—shortsightedly. He harangued Mills at length over the phone (Chuck D. may be, as he says, "louder than a bomb," but as anyone who knows him will attest, he is nowhere near as succinct); when he learned that Mills was preparing a follow-up story for *SPIN*, Chuck D. told him, "I told [Leland] he better not take it." Chuck D. denies saying this; Mills has it on tape. (In fact, Chuck D. and I never discussed the assignment.) After the Voice reprinted a large excerpt from Mills's interview on June 14, Chuck D. called writer RJ Smith, berating him. "Any shit that comes down on me, it's gonna come down on you. And that's a goddamn threat... I ain't gonna write no goddamn whiteboy liberal letter to the editor, no article either." (He was, it appears, going to attack Smith in song, as he had earlier written "Bring the Noise," he says, about me.)

The actual circumstances of the interview play out Public Enemy's problems in microcosm. Having put ten himself into a situation he could not handle (scheduling himself for two simultaneous interviews), Chuck D. tried to lie and bully his way out of the ensuing problems, rather than confront them, and ended up just throwing fuel on the fire.

These threatening phone calls were ineffectual machismo, and a gross miscalculation of the forces that had been stirred up. Before the Voice piece ran, Chuck D. told Smith, "The shit storm hasn't even begun yet." After June 14, when the story was no longer confined to a small right-wing paper, the storm began in earnest. Griff had all but dared Jews to send "their faggot little hit men" against him; it was the sort of challenge that rarely goes unanswered.

Mordachai Levy, born Mark, has the look and voice of a nerdy kid grown into a nerdy 27-year-old. An accountant by trade, in 1981 he was arrested in connection with a bombing near the Soviet mission in Los Angeles, and again for allegedly attacking reputed Nazi war criminal Boleslav Makovskis. He paid a fine for the second incident, but never served time for either.

The following year, at the age of 20, he formed the Jewish Defense Organization. At the time, Rabbi Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League, which had been strong in the late Sixties, was beginning to deteriorate. Levy's slogan is, "Every Jew a 22." A better slogan, he has said, is "Every Jew an M-1," but it doesn't rhyme." The organization's logo is a machine gun inside a Star of David. He formed the JDO, he says, "to help Jews fight against their enemies in the United States: anti-Semites, Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, the Communists. Lyndon LaRouche and Louis Farrakhan are no right to talk, no right to walk, no rights to live."

At JDO meetings, Levy provides rifle and shotgun license applications, and also offers courses in weapons training. These courses, given on occasional Sundays, include practice with Uz1 submachine guns. At a meeting attended by a reporter from *Present Tense* magazine, a young woman spoke up that "All blacks

despise Jews." Since Farrakhan said—in a remark widely quoted and routinely taken out of context—"Hitler was a great man," he has been a target of JDO oratory. (He actually said, "Hitler was a great man, but wicked," meaning only that he was powerful. Farrakhan devotes more energy to exhorting Christians, particularly black Christians, than he does to Jews.)

When Griff's remarks appeared in the Voice on June 14, complete with references to the Nation of Islam, Levy responded with an organized campaign to persuade retailers and distributors to boycott Public Enemy products. Mailing out photocopies of the Voice piece to 200 record stores, the JDO included leaflets reading, in part, "If you're white, if you're Jewish, if you're a decent American, or if you're black and against Farrakhan, PUBLIC ENEMY IS YOUR ENEMY..." They were organizing a boycott of Public Enemy's materials. WE HATE TO STOP THESE BIGOTS AND ANTI-SEMITES ANY WAY WE CAN! According to a store owner, who called me and said he readily supported the boycott, JDO members forcefully told more reluctant retailers that "it would be a good idea" not to carry Public Enemy records. The number he left turned out to be a non-working number—one of many bogus calls.

"Let's talk about something else, let's talk about basketball," says Chuck D., loud, always loud, as his group crumbled around him. "What happened to Karl Malone and Utah?"

Demonstrators chanted "We hate Public Enemy! We hate Public Enemy!" outside the opening of Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing," for which the group's new single, "Fight the Power," provided the soundtrack. (Lee directed PE's "Fight the Power" video, which features a surprise cameo by Tawana Brawley. In perfect synchrony with the group's deliberate blurring of the lines between news, entertainment and propaganda, Brawley appears in the video as a happy celebrity, crowned by her weeks in the news.) Public Enemy sat out the premiere, feeling helpless against the disruption they had caused Lee. As "Fight the Power" promised to become both the best-selling 12-inch in the history of Motown and one of the most controversial, Chuck D. also felt disappointed. "I was looking forward to spending the summer talking about Elvis Presley and John Wayne."

Russell Simmons started receiving threatening phone calls at home, anonymous callers saying, "We know where you live," or "We know where your parents live." Persons claiming to be Simmons and a Muslim magazine reporter called *SPIN* to harangue Senior Editor Joe Levy (no relation) about Public Enemy; both pressed Levy on why Jews, himself included, lacked the courage to stand up to Public Enemy. The "Simmons" caller announced Public Enemy's dissolution, and cited pressure from Columbia as the cause. He also said, prematurely, that the MCA deal was off, and cited an alleged videotape of Public Enemy onstage with Farrakhan at a Madison Square Garden rally, on which Farrakhan said, "Jews, you're going to the ovens."

"You can't argue with a videotape of that," the caller said, said, "and 40,000 people applauding." Farrakhan never made these remarks.

The real Russell Simmons, who blames Griff for the phony call—probably incorrectly—told me that Columbia never put any pressure on the group, either to fire Griff or disband. "The only one putting pressure

on them was me," he said. Stephey confirmed that, far from pressuring the group, Columbia kept its distance, apparently content to let this very successful act fall apart or solve the problem or go into hiding on its own, as long as the company did not have to get involved. (Walter Zeffinoff, CEO and president of CBS Records Inc., and a Zionist, found himself in a sticky position. Recently embarrassed before his new Sony employers by a *New York Times* article about CBS's slipping status in the industry, Zeffinoff saw one of his more successful and promising acts publicly calling Israel the evil empire.)

Stores began calling Def Jam and Rush Artist Management, saying they would never carry another Public Enemy item; these calls, it later turned out, were not really from stores at all, but from impostors hoping to undermine the group. Six JDO members with baseball bats reportedly stood Elizabeth Street in search of the Rush office, but this now seems like more disinformation.

In Washington, David Mills was flooded with mail from anti-Semitic organizations, supporting Griff and chastising Mills for his apparent solidarity with the Jews.

Both of Public Enemy's publicists, irked more by

Chuck D.'s obstinacy than by Griff's anti-Semitism, refused even to work with the group again, but both continued to do just that. A Jewish independent publicist, approached by the group in a typically heavy-handed stratagem, declined to represent what he called "DJ Jewhaters." Mordachai Levy announced on a nationally syndicated radio talk show that Public Enemy had disbanded as a result of pressures brought following meetings he had initiated between himself and high-level record company executives.

One of the quiet ironies inflaming the situation was that Public Enemy had always drawn more support from the white media than the black media. From the start, college radio stations, rock-'n'-roll magazines and MTV embraced the group while black radio, magazines and Black Entertainment Television kept their distance. So to the extent that the group's name meant anything, once the trouble started, they were already in the enemy's court. Accusations flew everywhere. By late June, it was impossible to tell whom or what to believe.

The group kept changing its story daily. On Monday, June 19th, Chuck D. told Mills that Griff would remain in Public Enemy, but no longer as Minister of Information or leader of the SIWs. Two days later, at a press conference at the Sheraton Centre in Manhattan, Chuck D. announced to a small battery of reporters (and anxious MCA and Columbia publicists) that Griff had been fired. Wearing a black baseball hat that he refused to tilt back for the cameras, Chuck D. was uncharacteristically ill at ease, trying to appear humble without looking like he was swallowing something bad. "Offensive remarks by my brother Professor Griff over the past year are not in line with Public Enemy's program at all," he said. "We're not anti-Jewish, we

Continued on page 100



RELAX

YOU'RE WITH ASCAP, SO REST EASY. YOUR PROFESSIONAL NEEDS
WILL GET THE PROFESSIONAL ATTENTION THEY DESERVE, AND YOU'LL GET
WHAT YOU DESERVE. WE'RE NOT PROMISING THAT YOUR CAREER WILL ALWAYS BE A
DAY AT THE BEACH. BUT AT LEAST YOU'LL KNOW THERE'S SOMEBODY
LOOKING AFTER YOU TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T GET BURNED.



A S C A P

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF COMPOSERS, AUTHORS & PUBLISHERS



AN HERO

He lived to save the rainforests of the Amazon, but a hired assassin cut his battle short. Chico Mendes's life is a hero's story. Weeks before his murder he gave it to filmmaker Miranda Smith.

Article by Francisco "Chico" Mendes Filho

My name is Francisco Mendes Filho, but I'm popularly known as Chico Mendes. I was born in the jungle, in the rubber tapping area six kilometers from the Bolivia frontier on the 15th of December, 1944. And, like all sons of rubber tappers, I began to work in the fabrication of rubber at the age of 9 or 10. I did this for 28 years, without a break.

Many people ask me why and how did I become active in the movements defending the forest and the rubber tappers. I think it was a matter of luck: I hit the jackpot in a lottery! In 1961, I learned of a man who was different from the other rubber tappers. He lived a three-hour walk away from my house through the jungle and his name was Euclides Fernando Tavora.

We got to know each other one afternoon when he was making a little trip around the area to get to know the people who lived in that jungle. And this meeting was important because he invited me to his house to allow him to teach me to read.

So for more than three years I made the three-hour walk through the jungle to stay with him every weekend at his house. And during the night he taught me to read using clippings and a few newspapers that he received one or two months late.

And I soon learned that he was not only interested in teaching me to read. His greater interest was in teaching me other things that were very important for the future. We were being robbed and exploited by the patrons, the big landowners, and we could do nothing because we didn't know how to count or read.

I learned to read and write in the midst of the post-1964 military regime that was installed in Brazil, through discussion and on the basis of reading the newspaper—any bit of news. Soon, we were able to obtain a battery-operated shortwave radio. One night we would listen to a program in Portuguese on the Voice of America and have a discussion concerning the philosophy of American politics, and on yet another day we would discuss the news bulletins released by the BBC.

Later in one of my last conversations with him, Euclides explained that he was an ex-army officer who had participated in the leftist resistance movement of 1935 in Brazil. With the defeat of the movement, he was arrested along with the other members of the movement, and incarcerated on the island of Fernando de Noronha. They escaped in a boat to Belém, and then on to Bolivia, where they became involved in the resistance movements of the Bolivian workers. With the defeat of the workers, Euclides hid himself in the jungle, walking through it until he reached the Brazilian frontier. At that point he decided to live in the jungle and learn to be a rubber tapper.

In 1965, Euclides became ill and left the jungle on a trip to the city from which he never returned. He disappeared. The news I heard was that he had died, but I don't know. During the following five years or so I became extremely isolated. After he disappeared, I thought to myself, what should I be doing? In this extremely difficult moment of military rule, I couldn't do many things because I was likely to be persecuted. At this point, a process of struggle for the autonomy of the rubber tapper was beginning. All of us together, myself included, were slaves of the patrons. We were submitted to the orders of the patrons. In our last conversation together, Euclides told me that we can look forward to 15 or 20 years of military rule in Brazil, a very strong dictatorship. And that this dictatorship was financed by the CIA to demobilize all the peasants' resistance movements that had been struggling for agrarian reform. And that I could only do something in defense of the rubber tappers the day that I joined some association or union organization. And that I, in isolation, would never be able to do anything.

In 1975, the first committee of the National Confederation of Agriculture Workers (CONTAG) arrived here in Acre. It was precisely at that moment that the large farmers arrived from the southern regions of the country to finish off our forest and sow the countryside with hundreds of professional murderers—throwing thousands of families of rubber tappers off of the land, while burning thousands of their small houses in these jungles. From this time on I began in this fight in defense of my comrades.

In 1976, we began the first resistance movement against large-scale deforestation. On the 1st of March, our group of 50 rubber tappers surrounded an encampment of laborers who were engaged in an enormous deforestation project. We kept up the siege for three days. The security authorities took this very badly, because it was considered a national security area. But our movement was peaceful. Our movement was not one that had as its objective the spilling of blood.

I continued in the life of the union movement together with my comrades. I made my choices and I liked it a great deal. This was the only way in which to resist. During my 15 years in the movement I confronted much persecution, many threats and a lot of violence, as I continue to do to this day.

All of this large-scale deforestation was the result of propaganda of the government of our region that said that we needed to bring development and progress to our region. And with all of this came the opening up of the road known as the BR-317 highway. The moment

that this highway was put into service, the rubber tappers living alongside it were suddenly in the accessible areas where most of the expulsions of rubber tappers occurred. Large land owners forcibly took over the road-front areas.

From 1970 to 1975, in my municipality of Chapuri alone, the fires and earth movers destroyed 180,000 rubber trees, 80,000 Brazil nut trees, and more than 1.2 million trees of other species, including wood ostensibly safeguarded by the law and thousands of trees of medicinal value which are so important for us. Various animal species disappeared too as they were burned out. From this point on began the very violent process against us.

All of this came about because of the false propaganda of development and progress. The progress of the opening of the highway only brought ruin upon us. An example of this is the projects approved by the international banks for the paving of this highway. They ruined our lives. And it was precisely because of this that I traveled to Miami to tell the directors of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that the projects that it was financing in my country were serving only to ruin the lives of thousands of workers in the forests.

The result was very good. I went to Washington and met with representatives of the United States Senate Finance Committee, which underwrites the loans of the IDB to Brazil, and with representatives of senators from the Democratic Party. And I told them, in response to their question of whether or not the Indians and the rubber tappers were against the paving of the road: No, we're not against the paving of the highway. We've never been against progress and development. But we are against the politics that lie behind all of this, this famous propaganda of progress and development. Despite all the money having been lent for these projects and the development of Amazonia, these projects don't benefit the populations they should. These projects only benefited a half-dozen large landowners in the region. These projects facilitate the destruction of thousands of hectares of forest.

When I returned from Washington to Brazil I discovered that my denunciations had had very large repercussions. The Bank sent a commission to Brasília to verify, witness or prove all the denunciations that I had made. In fact what I had said was proven true and, as a result, the remaining funding for the paving of the BR-364 highway, the project supported by the World Bank, was suspended. I was severely criticized and persecuted by the large landowners and the government and politicians of Brazil. They accused me of being a false leader. They accused me of having gone to the United States to impede the progress and development of the region. I



could hardly believe that what I had said would have such force or that it would have such influence. Nonetheless, I was pleased that people were taking seriously all the denunciations that I had made.

In 1976, when we began to resist the large-scale deforestation, the struggle was extremely difficult. By 1985, we had organized about 45 resistance efforts against the deforestation—suffered 30 deaths and won 15 partial victories. But these 15 victories guaranteed the preservation of 1.2 million hectares of virgin forest. They were not devastated. Still there was a very serious problem. We were in a very big fight in defense of the forest but we did not have, in our minds, an alternative idea, a proposal or an argument.

"You are fighting to defend the forest," someone would ask, "but what is it that you want to do with this forest?"

And we weren't in the position to offer a concrete response. At the beginning of 1985 an idea came up at the union of rubber tappers of Chauri to organize the first national meeting of rubber tappers in Brasília. Why in Brasília? Because in Brasília the authorities had, until that moment, considered Amazonia a vacuum with no one living there. We wanted to prove to the world that Amazonia had people living there, and that it was not deserted.

This was an historic meeting. We got together in Brasília in October of 1985—130 leaders of rubber tappers from all over Amazonia. From this point we discovered the idea of creating extractivist reserves in Amazonia. This would be the real agrarian reform for Amazonia that we wanted, because we rubber tappers never fought to be the owners or property holders of land. What we want is that the state own the land and that the rubber tappers have usufruct (nonownership, temporary) rights over it. After the meeting government agencies released this idea all over Brazil and even to environmental organizations overseas.

In January of 1986, the first Indian and rubber tapper commission went to Brasília. It was after the first meeting that we thought of the idea of an alliance with the Indians. The Indians are the legitimate owners of Amazonia, and the rubber tappers were used to destroy them and their resources. It was a very big war for many years. Neither we, the rubber tappers, nor the Indians were spared by this war. So we went to Brasília—a group of Indians and a group of rubber tappers—to ask for audiences at all the ministries linked to the Amazonian situation.

People were amazed, saying, "Indians and rubber tappers together. Didn't you fight before? Weren't you enemies? How is it that now you're united?" And we responded, "We understand today that our fight is the same one. The struggle of the Indian should be the same as that of the rubber tapper. We are not enemies of one another. We should be together today to fight together to defend our Amazonia."

At the same time, a team of environmentalists arrived here to learn about the forest and the struggle of the rubber tappers, and to learn also a little bit about my life. And this was important because the struggle of the rubber tappers began to be better known.

We rubber tappers do not want to be landowners. What we want is for Amazonia to become state property with usufruct rights reserved for the rubber tappers. We presented this as an alternative to guarantee the future of Amazonia.

We also have other alternatives. The Brazil nut is an important food product. We have other products that are extracted from the forest. But until today the govern-

ment has not been interested in industrializing them. This is the case with the oil of Tucuma, the oil of Pacua, the Popaiba (a medicinal oil), the Pupunha, the Abacaba, the Acai, and so many others. Inside of the extractivist reserves our priority is to struggle for the industrialization and marketing of all these products.

We guarantee that if the government takes into consideration the joint proposal of the rubber tappers and the Indians, in a few years Amazonia's economic importance will not be only for us but for the national economy as well. What we will not tolerate is the destruction of Amazonia, because the Amazon's destruction represents genocide for the peoples of the forest with negative consequences for the entire planet.

Without international support, without the international environmentalist organizations, today we would still not have a single reserve. If today we have some reserves it is because of this international pressure on the government.

People ask us, "You don't want to destroy even one more tree in all of Amazonia?" No. We are conscious of the fact that down throughout the years the rubber tap-

All of us together, myself included, were slaves of the patrons.

pers and Indians established their subsistence plots and never threatened the forest. What has threatened and threatens the forest—threatens Amazonia—are the large landowners, the politics of the land speculation and the large-scale deforestations that have as their objective the replacement of man by cattle. It would be a disaster if this process were allowed to continue in our region.

Amazonia should not be allowed to be transformed into some grazing area. It is not only the cow that is useful for sustenance. The thousands of head of cattle that replaced the rubber tappers who were expelled to make room for these cattle; this substitution created a grave problem for the region's economy. Despite all the defeats and hard knocks that we have suffered, and all of the destruction, rubber continues today to be the principal source of economic wealth in the state and in the whole region.

What else happens with this large-scale deforestation? Besides creating thousands and thousands of unemployed people, hunger, misery and violence, the policy favoring large landowners also has a grave repercussion on the very climate that we confront today. Fifteen years ago we did not have the high temperatures that we have here today. Until 1970 the maximum temperature in our region was around 25 degrees Celsius. Now the temperature rises to 40 degrees in some areas. Another grave problem is the possibility of the extinction of rivers. The principle river in our region, the Acre River, is today in danger of disappearing as a direct consequence of the deforestation.

This year, and last year during the months of January and March, we had the highest rate of refugees because of the floods caused by deforestation. Hundreds of families were left homeless. The government asked for help in the form of foodstuffs. The United States sent

food, sent milk; Denmark sent milk; various states around Brazil sent milk, sent food, sent clothes. What was shameful was these things were stolen by the state government team. They were hidden in their houses to be used later as "bakery" for distribution in electoral campaigns. The food and donations were used to buy votes.

And so who is doing this? Who is robbing the food? Who is taking money out of the public coffers that might be used for some state project but is instead redirected into the purchasing of votes in the period preceding elections? It is the same group that backs the policies that are leading to the destruction of Amazonia. And so all of this is an organized team effort. And we have to fight so that so many things of this nature, so many crimes, do not occur. In addition to the crimes against the forest, which produce the unemployment and the misery of workers, there is also the fraud and corruption that is unfortunately dominating our state and our country.

A difficult situation has arisen because of this whole movement. Our work has caused repercussions on both the national and international levels. These repercussions have helped a great deal in guaranteeing my life. But still, the large businessmen and landowners of Amazonia are concerned about our work in defense of the forest, because it will wound their economic interests. It is exactly because of this that the threats are increasing.

In our region, for example, in the last few days, the number of hired gunmen has gone up. The pressure has gone up. An attempt to persecute the principle leaders has been made. In fact, this year blood has already been spilled—two rubber tappers whom hired gunmen shot and gravely wounded, and a leader assassinated by gunmen hired by the high command of the official party. Until today there has been no punishment. We managed to get an order issued for the imprisonment of the murderers. But unfortunately, the government asked that the order for imprisonment not be complied with because this would excessively publicize the struggle of the rubber tappers.

On the other hand the government is obligated to give me security. It knows that my death, or the death of one of my comrades would have an enormous international repercussion. And so the government sits between one situation and the other. It lights one candle inside, and another for the Devil.

Just so you get a better idea of what I'm saying: Here in the municipality, for the first time there is a military commander who has an interest in putting the hired gunmen in prison. The judge of the judicial district also wants to jail the gunmen. But the higher levels of government neither permit nor provide the conditions for them to jail the gunmen.

This is a grave problem. But this is all part of a job that we will carry forward. It is the commitment that we have. It is the commitment of the National Council of Rubber Tappers. It is the commitment of the people of the Amazon forest to carry this fight forward. ☉

On December 22, 1988, Chico Mendes was killed by a shotgun blast in an ambush outside his home in the Amazon. Two landowners, a father and a son, have since been arrested in connection with the murder. His death sparked an angry reaction. Activists around the world are demanding that the rainforests be preserved as Chico's legacy.

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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

Compound Q, whether cure or bust, is the story of AIDS. It is the story of people with AIDS testing the limits once again of the feds and the profit machine of modern science.

Column by Drew Hopkins

Jim Corti was getting anxious. A registered nurse and international smuggler, he had come to Shanghai to make a drug deal, and had run into what appeared to be a mounting civil war. It was mid-May, and martial law had just been declared. The Chinese were searching all Westerners leaving the country, looking for videotapes and camera equipment that might have recorded their turmoil. "I knew that getting out of there with the goods was going to be very difficult," Corti recalls.

And it mattered. Because Corti wasn't there to get smack or hash. He was buying Trichosanin, an extract from Chinese cucumber root, known in the States as GLQ223, or by its street names of "Compound Q" or just "Q." And his customers weren't addicts, strung out and sweating through DTs. They were people with AIDS, desperate to try anything that might save their lives. Corti, who makes no profit from his operation, has been smuggling some of the hundreds of AIDS treatments available worldwide into the States for five years, starting with Ribavirin, which he imported from Mexico. Enraged at the slowness of the government to test and approve promising treatments, Corti sees what he is doing as the best way to save lives. "It's murder otherwise. To do anything other than what we are doing—if we were to walk away from it—would be like spitting in these people's faces."

Corti had "exceptional connections" in Shanghai.

Illustration by Greg Spalenko



Bearing gifts of hard-to-get electronics from LA, Corti secured an unspecified quantity of Compound Q and made it back through customs and out of China. But Corti didn't leave turmoil behind. The Compound Q he brought back was going to throw him, and several leaders and doctors in the AIDS community, into one of the most controversial stories since AIDS emerged. Because Compound Q was no ordinary drug. It is the first drug that had gotten mainstream scientists using the "C-word"—"Cure." And Corti's shipment wasn't just going to individual patients. It was going straight into the first national, underground AIDS treatment study.

"This is looking like we can aim for a cure," says San Francisco doctor Alan Levin, one of the key physicians involved in the underground trial of Q. "If it

does what we think it does, it alone, or more likely in combination with other drugs, could affect a cure."

The underground trial, or "treatment program" as the coordinators were forced legally to call it, included patients and doctors in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles and Miami, and was choreographed by the San Francisco-based AIDS treatment clearing-house Project Inform. The program—the most extensive underground trial of an untested and unapproved drug in American medical history—would challenge the AIDS community and test the limits of the Food and Drug Administration's snail-paced approval process. "We were pushing the envelope," says Project Inform director Martin Delaney.

Delaney's plan was to complete the program and present the data to an astonished FDA in September,

hopefully pushing testing months, or perhaps years, ahead of schedule. It all might have worked out as they planned, but, one month into the trial, two of the 43 patients enrolled in the program died, and the beans were spilled.

The story of Q is the story of AIDS. Against a backdrop of corporate greed, scientists' egos and government lethargy, it is the story of a few people who put everything on the line to save their lives and the lives of their friends, lovers and patients. And the issues it raises are among the most fundamental in AIDS treatment: what is the best way, and how far should we be allowed to go, to get potentially promising but untried drugs into the bodies of sick people.

Compound Q, or GLQ223, or Trichosanin, is a protein extracted from the root of *Trichosanthes kirilowii*, or Chinese ginseng. Derivatives and extracts of tian xia fen, the Chinese name for the root, have been used in China for at least 1,000 years to induce abortions and, more recently, to treat coriochoriocarcinoma, a virulent form of uterine cancer, both of which it accomplishes by attacking placenta cells in the uterus.

In 1986, Trichosanin came West, brought by Dr. Yeung Hin-ying of the Chinese University in Hong Kong. In his laboratory high in the hills above Hong Kong, Dr. Yeung had studied this and other traditional plant remedies for over a decade. In his research of Trichosanin, he found that, in the test-tube, it killed macrophages, the scavengers of the immune system. Macrophages, which resemble the placental cells, Trichosanin attacks, go after invading organisms and secrete substances that call the immune system to action.

The primary signal of AIDS is a significant loss of T4 cells, or helper T-lymphocytes, an important component of the immune system. But researchers soon discovered that very few T4 cells are actively infected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV—about one in 10,000 to one in 100,000. Instead, they found, the major "reservoir" of HIV infection is in macrophages, four to seven percent of which have been found, in people with AIDS, to be infected. Macrophages are not killed by HIV, but rather are thought to harbor the virus while it carries out its destruction of T4 cells through more subtle and as yet not understood activities.

Thinking that Trichosanin might knock out enough macrophages in people with AIDS to wipe out infection, leaving an HIV-free body to regenerate non-infected macrophages, Dr. Yeung boarded a plane and brought the drug to San Francisco. There he found Dr. Michael McGrath, microbiologist and AIDS researcher at the University of California at San Francisco, whose career has made him a specialist in the study of macrophages in AIDS. When McGrath mixed the protein with blood from AIDS patients in his laboratory, he discovered something nobody expected: in small quantities Trichosanin killed only those macrophages which were infected, leaving uninfected ones largely untouched. "The specificity was uncanny," McGrath later told the New York weekly, the *Village Voice*. "It had an almost magical quality."

McGrath was apparently dumbfounded by his discovery. Rather than announce it, he and Yeung made a bizarre move. They went 10 miles south of San Francisco, to Redwood City, to the headquarters of Genelabs, a biotechnology corporation. Working together, they formulated a process to recreate the Chinese drug and spent the next 18 months securing a patient, apparently without the knowledge of the Chinese. Nearly three years after McGrath's "magical" discovery,

the team finally went public, publishing a study of GLQ223 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on April 13, 1989.

Although McGrath insisted that this was a new drug that "has never been administered to humans," subsequent studies by McGrath's own team have shown it to be virtually identical to the Chinese drug, which has been administered to many thousands of patients. And, though McGrath claims that there was no way to get the drug from China, those who have procured large quantities of it say that the Chinese are very willing and eager to cooperate.

Despite the delay, when the news did break about the results of Q in the test tube, the AIDS community went wild. A federal "Phase one" trial, led by Dr. Paul Volberding of UCSF's affiliate hospital, San Francisco General, was scheduled to begin in May to test Q's toxicity. But the study was expected to take six months to a year, and people with AIDS did not have time to wait.

Patients and buyers clubs, by now expert at importing and distributing unapproved AIDS treatments, quickly located the Shanghai Institute and were bringing the Chinese version of Q to the States. Within a matter of days, a guerrilla treatment group in Fort Lau-

"This is looking like we can aim for a cure," says San Francisco doctor Alan Levin, one of the key physicians involved in the underground trial of Q.

—Dr. Alan Levin

derdale, Florida, had secured several doses of the drug and administered it to AIDS patients, with very promising results: T-cell counts shot up, and levels of p24, a protein component of HIV used to measure the level of virus in patients' blood, fell to zero in some cases. With this news, even more smugglers got into the act, including Corli, and reports were circulating that thousands of doses might be coming into the country.

Meanwhile, desperate patients were going to Chinese pharmacies, which can be found in any city with a Chinese community, to buy dried, unpurified tian xia fen, which is useless for treating HIV infection, since the Trichosanin breaks down when the root dies, and is in itself highly toxic. But people with AIDS began distilling the root, or mixing a dried powder form of it into solution, and injecting it in themselves. One man with AIDS in Kansas City tried this and ended up in the emergency room with a nearly failed liver and symptoms of stroke and neurological damage.

By early May, supplies of Q were flowing into California. In San Francisco, a man with ARC, or AIDS-related complex, who doesn't want his name used, bought two ampules of it and was determined to treat himself. He injected the first one at home in his apartment, but when he had some adverse side effects, such as dizziness and confusion, he decided to seek medical supervision before injecting the second dose.

He had heard that Dr. Alan Levin was open-minded, and hopeful about Q, so he paid him a visit. He told Levin that he was going to inject himself with the second ampule, but he wanted supervision. If Levin was willing to help, great. If not, he was going to do it alone. Levin says the patient was fairly healthy, with a good T-cell count, and so he was able to persuade him to wait, at least until preliminary toxicity tests were

complete. But when he heard that Volberding was going to take six months, and probably longer, to complete the test, he became very concerned, particularly for his many AIDS patients who would probably not survive that long.

So, when Martin Delaney started talking about doing a secret treatment program, Levin was ready to participate. "People were moving ahead, and you're not going to stop them," says Delaney.

With the help of an anonymous clinical researcher and their lawyer, Curtis Ponzi, Delaney, Levin and several other physicians constructed a detailed treatment protocol. They weren't going to take any chances that their data would be rejected by the FDA. They drafted an informed consent form, standard for any FDA-regulated study, they videotaped every patient's request for treatment and question-and-answer period, and they even enlisted the help of observers from the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR) to audit all their data, so that the FDA "couldn't do any of their whining about wanting to come out and check everything," says Delaney. "It's already been checked."

Some are concerned that the informed consent process might not have been neutral, pointing to the group's failure to list "immune suppression" as one of

the likely side effects of treatment with Compound Q—a side effect frequently listed in the literature on the drug. But Levin says he fully anticipated a temporary immune suppression in his patients and that this was covered in the videotaped question-and-answer period. "What we talked about was a reactivation of your disease," Levin says. "So that's how we covered the temporary immune suppression."

Several organizations, including the Community Research Initiative (CRI) in New York and Community Research Alliance (CRA) in San Francisco, have initiated community-based drug trials and advocate greater availability of promising drugs. Their research, except for informal monitoring programs, has always been conducted with the knowledge and approval of the FDA. Delaney's was the first to step completely out of the federal loop, on a drug which had not even passed phase-one toxicity trials.

For many in the AIDS community, Delaney's involvement with something so controversial was surprising. Many had labeled him a yes-man to the FDA and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "I've reached the state of frustration. I've been working for years with the FDA and NIH, trying to change the rules and speed things up, and yeah, progress is being made, a little bit at a time. But people are dying at a rate of 150 a day, and in some ways we are substantially any different than three or four years ago. It still takes five to ten years to get these damn drugs through the system. It was time to declare war, in my mind."

"As an activist, I could no longer stand up to the ACT UP of the world and say, 'Just trust me guys. Things are improving in Washington.' I think they have rightfully been calling my act on that."

Project Inform's treatment program was underway by the end of May, including some 43 patients, in its first stage, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Miami. The first stage of the program, which tested CombiComb Q alone, concluded in early July, with the second stage, which combines Q with AZT, to be completed by the end of August. The results from both were to be presented to the FDA, with a list of demands for immediate, follow-up research—providing the results were positive—by early September, well before Volberding's UCSF trial would be half-complete.

By early July, results were already coming in. Inform doctors found that, in all those patients who entered the program with elevated levels of p24 antigen, there was a decrease of at least 50 percent, according to Levin. There was no rise in T4 counts in patients who started out with counts well below 100, but in those patients with T4 counts above 200, there was an average 30 percent increase.

The healthier patients were in New York and Los Angeles, Levin says, with the San Francisco group taking, in his words, "the worst cases—the sickest people who had absolutely no alternative." While the normal T4 cell, or "helper T-cell" count of a healthy person is in the range of 800 to 1,200, and people with AIDS and ARC start to really worry when the count falls to 100, Levin says that "13 of 14 patients that we treated, if you add all their helper cells together, you get less than 100. And most of them were less than five."

One of those patients was 44-year-old Robert Parr, who had heard about Q and was desperate to try it. At the time he approached Delaney and Levin about the study, he told his roommates that he knew he was losing some of his mental abilities. He was moving into a state of utter panic and desperation because of it. The previous literature from China suggested that Q could cause neurological reactions, and Parr knew that, on those grounds, Project Inform was excluding patients who had any history of "AIDS dementia" or other central nervous system disorders. (The theory is that the virus enters the brain via glial cells, a type of macrophage that works in the brain as an insulator for the brain's electrical activity. If a lot of glial cells are infected, Levin reasons, then there will be a temporary disturbance in the electrical activity they insulate when Compound Q is given.)

Despite the battery of physical and psychological tests run on prospective patients, he was able to keep his neurological symptoms secret, as well as a severe concussion he had suffered from a hammer attack in an apparent gay-bashing incident in 1981. "The more [neurological] problems he had," says Delaney, "the more frantic he was to get into the program, and the more frantic he was to keep us from knowing it."

Delaney and Levin say that many patients experience mild neurological responses some 36 to 48 hours after an injection of Q, but that it passes after a few hours or days. In Robert Parr's case, though, what began as the expected period of "confusion," accelerated over the next few hours into a coma.

Parr was taken to Mount Zion hospital in San Francisco, where his brother, who had a living will, immediately contemplated removing life-support. Living wills, legally recognized in California, are agreements between a person and his or her family or lawyer that no heroic measures will be taken to keep the person alive. Dr. Levin, convinced that Parr would come out of the coma within 24 hours, argued for, and got, a 72-hour stay. And, in fact, Parr recovered, and his vital signs were returning to normal, when, five days later, he threw up in his sleep and breathed it into his lungs.

causing what is known as aspiration pneumonia.

Parr was treated swiftly and was given a breathing tube to allow his lungs to clean themselves out. The call went out to the family and to Dr. Levin. "The brother felt this was an heroic measure and was in violation of his agreement with his brother," Delaney explains. Before Dr. Levin could arrive to counsel the brother on his decision, the tube was removed. "Of course," Delaney says, "upon pulling the tube, he died within a matter of minutes, because he wasn't ready to have it pulled. And that was how Robert Parr died."

With the death of Robert Parr, and the suicide of another of the patients in the San Francisco group—a man with pulmonary Kaposi's Sarcoma and a very poor prognosis—the Project Inform program could no longer be kept secret. Within days, news of it had exploded in dailies across the country.

Battle lines were quickly drawn. The FDA announced that it was investigating the trial for possible illegality, but said it was "too early to speculate" whether it would bring criminal charges. Volberding, who felt his own study was threatened, lambasted DeLaney and Project Inform. "What they've done is a real disservice to volunteers in the study and to a drug that might be interesting," he told *New York Times* reporter Gina Kolata. "It doesn't take a genius to hand out drugs to people without controls. . . ."

Delaney counters by asserting that Inform's program was one of the most detailed and rigorous in history. "Let's assume the worst," he says. "Let's assume that the drug was clearly responsible in some at least indirect ways [for Parr's death]. Because, sure, he wouldn't have been in the hospital and he wouldn't have had the aspiration pneumonia. But that's a risk he knew, absolutely knew, going in, and chose. AIDS patients have been saying to us that they are willing to take these risks if it can accelerate the glacial pace that they're having to suffer from now."

"The truth is, some desperate people who are dying of a disease sometimes die in the course of their effort to be treated for it. It happens in cancer. It happens in AIDS. The same day that Robert Parr died, 150 other people died of AIDS, and, we believe, because of the inability to get drugs that are already out there and should be available to them."

While Inform battled it out with Volberding and the FDA, controversy over the underground trials was building even within the AIDS community, with emotions and tempers flaring.

In San Francisco, the AIDS community seems solidly behind the Q program, with statements of support coming forth in John James's *AIDS Treatment News*, in the local gay press and from a number of AIDS community organizations. In New York, however, the treatment program took on a different twist. It was coordinated by Tom Hannan, who was also associate administrator of the Community Research Initiative (CRI). Although Hannan made it clear that he had taken on the project as a private citizen, he and CRI's president Michael Callen both fear that Hannan's association with the treatment program will endanger, by association, CRI's work, which depends upon good relations with drug companies and the FDA to expand the availability of drugs which are in the federal pipeline.

"As president of CRI, I am only interested in being involved with properly regulated clinical trials," says Callen, pointing out that CRI's Board of Directors has

Lee jeans

Presents

The Best in Blues Top 20 Blues Albums on Radio Charts

13. **Lif Eat & the Blues Impalers**, *Chicken, Biscuits or Gravy*, Alligator Alligator
2. **Lucky Peterson**, *Lucky Strike*, Alligator
3. **Howdy! Wolf**, *Cadillac Baby*, Rounder
4. **Boozoo Charlie-Nathan & Zydeco Cha-Cha**, *Zydeco Love*, Rounder
5. **Kenny Neal**, *Devil Child*, Alligator
6. **Boyz n the City**, *Love Man*, Vol. 1, Alligator
7. **Asa Ann Barton**, *Love My Lips*, Autone's
8. **Marcel Bapt**, *Gatorhythms*, Rounder
9. **Various Artists**, *Blues+crum*, Vol. 1, Rounder
10. **Various Artists**, *Blues+crum*, Vol. 2, Black Top
11. **Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters**, *Soul Searching*, Black Top
12. **Willie Davis**, *Seven Year Itch*, Island
13. **Willie Davis**, *Hoodoo*, Chess
14. **Various Artists**, *Soul Records Harmonica Classics*, Rounder
15. **Sugar Ray & the Blue Tones**, *Blues*, Verve
16. **Finetop Perkins**, *After Hours*, Blind Pig
17. **Charles Brown**, *One More for the Road*, Alligator
18. **The Dreamboat**, *Back to the Bay*, Goodwood, Concord
19. **Johnnie Johnson**, *Blue Head Johnnie*, Polar
20. **20. Grady Gaines & the Texas Epitaphs**, *Full Gait*, Black Top
21. **Various Artists**, *Fake Big Music*, Alligator

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Continued on page 103



WAS

IS

WICKED

SPINNS

Edited by Joe Levy

L.L. Cool J
Walking With a Panther
 Def Jam/Columbia

On "Def Jam in the Mother Land," the final word on L.L. Cool J's third album, he travels to the Ivory Coast and discovers, thousands of miles from his home in Hollis, Queens, just how bad he really is. It is a familiar conclusion, one he reached on most of the previous 15 songs. But it is a revelation nonetheless. As MFSB's "Love Is the Message," one of the first hip hop DJ records, loops in the background, L.L.'s ego becomes the thread of historical continuity that links Africa to the West Bronx to the future hip hop theme park, DisneyGhetto. On an album this old-fashioned, it rings as both an opportunity missed and a reminder of a job well done.

Walking With a Panther is a 21-year-old's trip through a past he never lived. "The very first thing I remember from rap," Kool Moe Dee said recently, between veiled barbs at L.L., "was a DJ hat spinning, and an MC talking about how def he is all night." A decade and a half later, *Walking With a Panther* sticks pretty close to this root. A b-boy icon in a Kangol and fat rope, L.L. is still slaying suckers who long ago gave up the fight, still jouncing skeezers who by now know the time. A love man for the 80s, he promises pleasure more convincingly than romance. It is a line even he may not believe in, but as the subject matter makes clear, *Walking With a Panther* is about grace, not faith.

This is rapping for the fun of it, for the beauty of a def phrase deftly turned. When L.L. reprises old school chants on "Clap Your Hands," it is both dumb and



L.L. Cool J: Don't stop till you get enough.

audacious; when he pulls it off, it's just plain funky. Talking nonsense over a routinely hype batch of samples, he elevates these jams with his tongue. Other rappers may say more, but no one says it quite as well. For all his b-boy machismo, L.L. is exceedingly musical. Never rushing a phrase, bopping lithely with unerring meter, he is practically

singing, but all on one note. This album rocks, but it also swags.

I always thought that L.L. was playing at the hardrock bit when he really wanted to be Michael Jackson. *Walking With a Panther* made me realize that this was a false dichotomy. Relentlessly conservative, drawing on the formal elegance of a tradition he missed, souping it up

more gracefully than its old champions, L.L. has become a *hardrock* Michael Jackson. Which isn't to say he'll have his *Thriller*, but that he has the right to pose with a baby kitten on his album covers. And maybe *Walking With a Panther* is his *Off the Wall*.

—John Leland



**Prince
Batman**
Warner Bros.

On his last few albums Prince has posited God and Satan as mighty, warring forces; here he uses Batman and the Joker for the same purposes, and gets to write het-up hymns to Kim Basinger's Vicki Vale in the bargain. Batman is teeming with dirty jokes, leering puns and the sort of cutting-edge rhythm & blues that makes the dirt seem deep.

Prince has written each of the nine songs on *Batman* in the voice of one of the movie's major characters. He assumes Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne, for example, to sing "Vicki Waiting," a slippery ballad that can't decide whether it wants to be earnest or sleazy. "Lemon Crush"—the title is Prince's most awful orgasm metaphor to date—is supposed to be a siren song trilled by Vicki to Bruce (Prince does it falsetto).

But the best stuff on *Batman* is the material Prince has written in the character of the Joker. This makes sense: The Joker is both evil and insane, qualities that Prince invariably links, in his naughty-but-moralistic way, with sex, and as *Dirty Mind* and *The Black Album* taught us, sex is what fires up Prince's best work. Thus, "Trust," "Electric Chair" ("My brain is jacking' all over the place") and the ferocious "Partyman" ("If it break when it bend, U better not put it in—ooh!") are the most concise and exciting songs he's written in some time.

Prince got burned by the movie—only two or three songs can be heard clearly in the film. (The prominent in-

strumental score was written by Oingo Boingo's Danny Elfman, released in a separate collection.) But Prince's *Batman* holds up without the superhero context. There are ideas here that have nothing to do with the Caped Crusader, such as "The Future," which includes the quatrain, "Yellow Smiley offers me X/ Like he's drinkin' ?/ Uptl would rather drink six razor blades/ Razor blades from a paper cup." Prince on ecstasy! This is a subject that is probably blowing the minds of nerdy comic-book fans all over the country even as I write.

—Ken Tucker

The Pogues *Peace And Love* Island

The Pogues' second LP, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*, lilted and rocked like an Irish wedding party gone bad: the band's been drinking, they start to brood, they play "No Nay Never" again but break off in the middle to jam while Shane MacManus screams about the devil and rape and British soldiers. Scary stuff. It told a story, Elvis Costello (who produced) wrote his own version of the Pogues' story with "Sleep Of The Just," and Richard Thompson (produced by Costello associate Mitchell Froom) wrote his own with "Yankee Go Home." So far the story belongs to Celtic louts with gin-soaked guitars, but who knows, maybe Taylor Dane will be inspired to pick up on it.

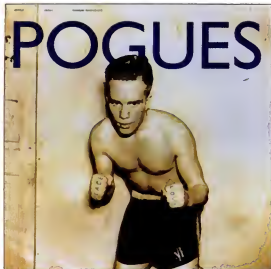
The Pogues don't brood like they used to, but their hearts are still in the right battle. Shane's sneering valentines and affectionate curses are now only part of the Pogues' story. Steve Lillywhite, who produced last year's sloppy *W I Should Fall From Grace With God*, continues on

Peace And Love to turn the Pogues into a real group, where everybody gets a turn to sing. This album features all these different voices taking shots (the non-Irish kind) at Shane. For instance, one Pogue thinks London looks like a bunch of tombstones against the sky. Shane thinks it's "just another bloody rainy day." I'm with Shane, and as Joyce might said about the plethora of competing voices, well, "boildoyle and rawhoney on me when I can beauray forstand a weird from sturk to finnic in such a pathwat as your rutterdamrotter."

But even with its confusion of voices, *Peace And Love* lilts and rocks. The gorgeously offhanded "Misty Morning, Albert Bridge," the old-style anti-Brit rant "Young Ned of the Hill," and the rum-guzzler "Cotton Train" are highly recommended to anyone whose Irish grandmother used to call the obituaries "the sports pages." Particularly rousing are Shane's characteristic bite-balls to his home city of London, "White City" and "London You're A Lady." Shane's bawl has never seethed with such an ominous sense of repressed rage. You can't figure out the words, and you don't need to. Shane manages to get less self-conscious, more morbid with every album. And hey, if Public Enemy's Flavor Flav can rap "silly rabbit," maybe someday Shane can sing "always after me lucky charms."

Till then, we have another great Pogues album, another relic of a provisional culture stripped of reference points long enough to smooch punk and Celtic folk together. It makes sense that the Pogues are more influenced by post-Irish immigrant culture than by actual Irish culture. That makes them fun, it makes them ours, and it makes them rock and roll.

—Robert Sheffield



Diana Ross *Workin' Overtime* Motown

Donna Summer *Another Place And Time* Atlantic

I've noticed that Diana Ross's album covers all call her, simply, "Diana," as if there were no other.

Missing from her new LP is everything I've ever liked about her. Also missing is everything I've ever disliked about her. It's truly strange—she doesn't sound like herself, but like a disembodied, androgynous soul voice.

On her 1976 disco smash, "Love Hangover," she was great without being distinctively Diana—she was singing all those voices, all those disco startlets and wannabes and also everybody on the make in bars and discos, everyone on a Friday night thrill.

But on this new recording her voice carries melody lines and nothing more. She's uncompromisingly or accidentally



self-effacing. So this isn't a Diana Ross album. It's a black dance album, produced by Nile Rodgers, and most of it is as uninteresting as it is uncompromising. It partakes of the new jack swing that's all over urban radio (Guy, Johnny Kemp, Keith Sweat, Bobby Brown): rhythm hard and loose and pushed up from along with the hooks and the melody. So where are the hooks and melodies—the things that make Paula Abdul and Karyn White so mildly likable? I listen through, wonder how to sell Diana apart from Johnny Kemp in the dark, and get hit—pww pww—twice in a row—by the two good dance cuts on here. The first, "Paradise," has this squirmy little off thing running against an ugly electro-rhythm ("acid house"). The second, "Keep On (Dancin')," has a repeating piano part (reminds me of house producer Marshall Jefferson) and touchingly pseudo-intellectual lyrics about people dancing to avoid the pain: "Stop pretending you need a quick release/in the nighttime, in the rain/like a moth drawn to the flame."

Maybe her commitment to music rather than to personality is admirable, but, um, could we have a little more ego next time, Diana?



As for Donna Summer, she was a hero of mine through 1979, then she became ... I don't know what she became. A singer with a strong voice and a "past." She reformed and stopped being a disco slut and never established anything else. An old article by Michael Freedberg says flat out, "No disco artist despised disco more fundamentally than Donna Summer." I actually don't believe that. But no disco artist sang with such a raging coldness. Smart, funny coldness. In "I Feel Love" she was out there and gorgeous in synth-cold outer space and no one could touch her. If she felt love, it wasn't for me.

I like maybe four things on her new

record: "This Time I Know It's For Real," an upbeat hit that goes back to old Summer corn such as "I Remember Yesterday"; "Sentimental," same thing; "I Don't Wanna Get Hurt," perky teeny-bop that would have been done better by fizzmonger Kylie Minogue; and "Breakaway," which could back a feminine hygiene commercial. No insult, it's just that I can't connect it or most of this LP to Summer, or to myself. The album's produced by bubblegum moguls Stock, Aitken and Waterman, who fill in all the spaces. There's no tension of voice against the rhythm; everything is padded; it's all so damn balanced.

—Frank Kogan

Van Morrison Avalon Sunset Mercury

As befits an institution, Van's got his own insignia now. A schematized, Tarot-ish sunburst emblazoned with his intertwined initials, it floats across an ocean of clouds in the inner sleeve, looking kind of schlocky. Inside the music, too, there's something

schlocky: either the bed of strings that cushions his soul growls throughout most of the tracks, or the preponderance of gold autumn days, smiling faces, and green countrysides that dapple the lyrics. But *Avalon Sunset*, Van's twentieth album since *Astral Weeks*, is a work that becomes more and more generous the less you ask of it. In the music and words, there's almost a complete absence of pain. Van celebrates God a lot (and pronounces it "Gud"), sometimes by name (the dapper pop of "Whenever God Shines His Light," a duet with born-again Christian Cliff Richard) and sometimes indirectly (the ballads "Have I Told You Lately" and "Contacting My Angel"). He celebrates nature, love and



poetry too; this is contemplation without conflict, remembrances without bitterness. And no matter how esoteric things get, a charge of sensuality perme-

ates. "The bodies move and we sweat," he sings in "Daring Night." "and have our being." Bang a gong, Van.

After the fiddled jaunts of last year's *Irish Heartbeat* and the artsy excursions of *Poetic Champions Compose*, *Avalon Sunset* is indeed a swan dive into the mainstream. No one could do it more gracefully. The orchestrations never swallow his plucky acoustic pickings, and there's plenty of gospel background vocals to lift you onto that higher ground he keeps singing about. Which is a pretty nice place to be.

—Karen Schoemer

Pete Townshend The Iron Man The Musical Atlantic

Yep, that's Pete Townshend's face next to the dictionary entry for "ambitious." Whatever the merits of the Who reunion tour, this former iconoclast has never retreated into nostalgia behind studio walls. So here he comes again with another concept album, trying to wrap up grand ideas in bitty pop tunes, bless his restless soul. Odder in its own quiet way than just about anything

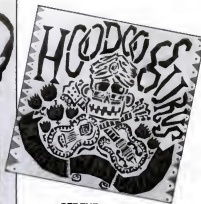
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else around, *The Iron Man* won't alter the course of cultural history, the way Townshend regularly did once upon a time, but it suits a senior eminence of his stature just fine.

Based on a short prose fantasy by British Poet Laureate Ted Hughes, this "modern song-cycle musical in the manner of Tommy" (Pete's description) spins a fuzzy tale of a 10-year-old boy, his farmer dad, the mammoth destructive robot of the title and a bunch of innocent bystanders, many of 'em loquacious woodland creatures. (Anyone requiring clear messages will get more satisfaction from the book, or PT's full stage work.) Casting himself in the lead role of young Hogarth, Townshend has recruited Roger Daltry to play Hogarth's father, Nina Simone to play a dragon from outer space (!), and John Lee Hooker as the mechanical giant. Plus, a host of bright young talents, portraying foxes, badgers, frogs, etc.



While the large cast of voices suggests something as uncool as a Broadway show, *The Iron Man* benefits from this diverse lineup. Daltry's stirring performance on the anthemic "Dig" makes a case for the renewed viability of the Who—it's amazing how he can sound like such a dummel on other people's songs, yet seem so heroic and eloquent in tandem with Townshend. (Never mind their dull cover of Arthur Brown's "Fire.") The imposing Simone chews scenery with nasty glee in the nearly-funky "Fast Food," calling for "a huge supply of organic, bleeding/palpating swill" to eat. Ick! Boogie-man Hooker doesn't fare too well when handed a sunlit melody ("Over the Top"); given the dark blues of "I Eat Heavy Metal," however, he can still give a body goosebumps.

To Townshend's credit, he isn't the least bit overshadowed by the heavy company. Somewhere along the line Pete became an enormously appealing singer, able to substitute warmth and expressiveness where he fell short in raw lungpower. He brings callow enthusiasm to the esoteric grooves of "A Friend Is A Friend," then shouts out crackling, Elton John-style rock on "All Shall Be Well." Dropping the guise of a plucky little boy, he unveils a potential standard with the melancholy "Was

There Life?" a gorgeously evocative meditation designed for 3:00 a.m. cocktails. (Bryan Ferry, take note.) It's piercing, adult brilliance.

Elsewhere, charm tends to outweigh substance. No matter: The mildest moments radiate a winning sweetness he was incapable of generating back in his loud youth. Pete Townshend has, of course, long since passed the point where he must justify his art by creating Major Works. (Time will tell whether this is one, though don't bet on it.) He now concentrates on pleasing himself, which can be pretty pleasing for us, too.

—Jon Young

John DeLafosse and the Eunice Playboys

Willis Prudhomme and the Zydeco Express

Zydeco Live!
Rounder

Boozoo Chavis and the Magic Sounds

Nathan and the Zydeco Cha-Chas

Zydeco Live!
Rounder

Zydeco records tend to neuter the music's slap-happier live tendencies and focus on accordion-tweedled melodies and the mandatory "tasty" lead guitar licks. But on their home turf—before a Black French crowd in a So. Louisiana bar where the beer is flowing and the notion of overbuds is as remote as that of particle physics—good zydeco bands regularly achieve the shambling zen boogie state of the best rock and soul of all time.

Zydeco Live!, recorded one weekend in March '88 at Richard's, a friendly and roomy party barn plunked alongside the highway midway between Opelousas and Eunice in the heart of French territory, captures the raw power of the music. Since neither John DeLafosse nor Boozoo Chavis—the circuit's biggest draws—seems too concerned with

"sharing" his music with the rest of America, it's appropriate that Rounder went south to catch him in one of their regular haunts. (It's a little funny here when between songs Chavis effuses, with Wayne Newtonesque sincerity, that he will never forget where he's from, since he rarely plays more than 50 miles from the spot where he was born.) Of course, part of zydeco's attraction to outsiders is that it is a small-scale and yet thriving scene that shows no signs of waning or even changing significantly at this point (at 26, Nathan Williams represents zydeco's future in this package, yet his set could have been recorded 15 years ago for all the innovation it displays; it doesn't need to pander to outsiders).

It's the headlines on these volumes (each act gets a side to make its case) that make Zydeco Live! essential. Anyone who's ever seen DeLafosse's Eunice Playboys and subsequently shelled out for one of his three studio albums would have had to be disappointed by the loss

recorded within the last five years that rocks harder than the version of Guitar Slim's "I Done Got Over."

Chavis' music, meanwhile, more dependent on hooky, dromy chunky-chank accordion riffing than rhythmic overdrive, has fared better in studio recordings than DeLafosse, but the raggedly-assed attack captured on his live side is equally fine. The Redd Foxx of zydeco (his triple-X version of "Deacon Jones," released on 45, is a porno rock classic; a diluted version is contained here), Boozoo is the one performer to take advantage of the live recording to get in a little self-aggrandizing autobiography. He is, as old people are fond of saying, a character. The formally somber "I'm Drilling," through which he seems about to burst out laughing, comes off simultaneously as the goofiest and loneliest gut-bucket blues plunk Beelzebub ever belched up to earth (and there have been plenty), replete with four-second-long attacks on a guitar neck that brilliantly replicate an actual spinal shiver.



The Gibson Bros. (l-r): Don Howland, Don Dow, Jeff Evans and Ellen Hoover.



And speaking of dead-on mimicry, kudus to Chavis' son; he barks exactly like a fat and mean-assed dog whose sole purpose in life is to keep people out of its owner's grassless yard on the stomper "Dog Hill."

—Don Howland

Gibson Bros. Dedicated Fool Homestead

of oomp in the translation to vinyl. Live, DeLafosse is all about rocking. His young and familial rhythm section—sons Geno on drums and Tony on bass, and nephew Jermaine Fontenot on rub board—is as propulsive as any in music; the snippets of melody from DeLafosse's accordion and Gene Chamblor's well-rehearsed lead bursts are all reined to the youngsters' mission. You hear it here; I defy anyone to name a song re-

None of the Gibson Bros are related or named Gibson, and one of them, stand-up drummer Ellen Hoover, wears calico dresses for a reason. Last year's paint-peeling debut *Big Fine Boogie* was a slab of retro-hick-rock that poured tar in the amps, stretched the treble like steel wool and bent the guitars bad. It picked through a junkyard of 50s ornery thrash, 60s trash, blue Delta devils, and country (when it was still called



hillbilly) looking for whatever it needed. Like some sock-hop Sonic Youth, the Bros slipped out of time by playing out of tune, into another dimension where pure and parody thrash at each other like cocks in a pit of woe-blue blues.

On Dedicated Fool, they throw in a few more woody chords, spruce up a bit, and mix San Francisco ballroom fuzz into the Sun studio echoes of *Big Pine*. Cracker croaker Jeff Evans opens "Spem Count," one of only three originals, by calling out, "Let's get it like it done was." It's funny and real, real gone, while pretty much summing up the Gibson's take on the scratchy ghosts that roll over in their grooves (Reverend Robert Wilkins, Willie Johnson, Skip James are among those covered): a mixture of rusty respect, seizure and poor grammar. In the Baptist song "Lone Wild Bird," Don Howland (whom astute readers may recognize as a SPIN rock scribe) calls after the spirit in an off-key moan. A raspy drunken violin answers, as if to say, "I am no closer to the key than you." It kicks like Stermo, and it's haunting the way stained bathtubs in a backyard or gray chunks of wood with bent rusty nails can be haunting.

—Erik Davis



The B-52's Cosmic Thing Reprise

After the release of their amazing first album 10 years ago, the B's biggest problem has been outdistancing the confines of their Lava-Lamps-Gone-Berserk manifesto. Several of the songs here, including the title song and the single "Channel Z," fail mostly 'cuz they sound like studio-induced "enthusiasm" or just dry runs through a tired tacky list of ingredients: b-movie mugging plus walkie-talkie effects equals a B-52's song.

But *Cosmic Thing* works, and not just because Nile Rodgers produced the best songs, or because Keith Strickland's guitar is a smooth meld of radio beam jerk and early 80s imitation funk. The real

lifeguards on Playa de Bouffant are the Metaluna twins, Kate and Cindy. Their science fiction voices blast through "Roam" like a low-flying ether cloud: it's the most honest, passionate moment on the album. Their singing cracks and croaks and soars, their harmony choruses vaporize, their fake eyelashes droop, they sound magnificent.

Elsewhere, on "Dry Country," goofy ole Fred Schneider trades nerdy quips with a little Prince sample, and on the instrumental "Follow Your Bliss," Strickland pops out a fat chummy guitar that weebies, wobbles, but never falls down. "Bliss" closes the album, and that's appropriate, if only because it, like the rest of *Cosmic Thing*, is such a ready-made soundtrack to blue skies and a red convertible.

—Pat Blashill

Various Artists The Nairobi Beat Rounder

The Nairobi Trio was a combo of musical wind-up chimps on the old "Emie Kovacs Show." The *Nairobi Beat* is a collection of recent singles from Kenya, where Jomo Kenyatta led the Mau Mau movement that ultimately brought an end to British rule. Musically, however, Kenya remained a colony of nearby Zaire until the late 60s, when the benga beat emerged from the terri-



tory of the Luo people on the shores of Lake Victoria. Encouraged by government radio, which banned Zairean soukous from the airwaves, benga variations proliferated among Kenya's other ethnic groups. Drier and snappier than soukous, with mordant, downward-turning melodies and razor-edged twin-guitar lines cutting mango-sweet harmonies, benga is one of the most appealing pop sounds on the continent—or for that matter, the planet.

For all the music's cheer, benga lyrics are a dismal catalog of domestic woe. While a pair of infants squall post-Ornette counterpoint in the background, Dick Njoroge complains (in Kikuyu, Kenyatta's language) that his wife has

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left and stuck him with the kids, but his Gatandu Boys make it sound like a celebration. Though other groups sing in Luo, Kamba, Luhya and Swahili (a non-tribal lingua franca), all—even Kenya's venerable Seventh Battalion army band, the Maaron Commandos—share a crisp, light attack, with none of the bitter Indian or Arabic inflections common to neighboring East African styles. And when the Kilhara Sisters damn faithless husbands (over the quick-stepping rhythms of the Mbiri Young Stars), their deadpan harmonies are enough to make Kovacs's miming monkeys drop their rubber masks.

—Larry Birnbaum

Exposé What You Don't Know Arista

The term "Latin hip hop" holds meaning about as well as cheese-cloth holds tripe soup, but it works just like pigeonhole a group like Miami's Exposé—if you blur the terms. Exposé are Latin, see, if you think tango, not salsa; dark, brooding, and sexy rather than bright, festive, and sexy. And they're hip hop if you forget about rapping and James Brown samples and head straight for hip hop's most overlooked achievement: the discovery that the "soulless" concoctions of German synthdicks Kraftwerk were great dance music.

Exposé are the Supremes in late-80s high-tech drag. Like the Supremes, this dance-pop trio mix girl-next-door r&b vocals and video-genic cuts with astonishing commercial success (their first album, 1987's *Exposure*, landed 4 of its 10 cuts in the pop top 10). And they have their own Big Gordy: Lewis A. Martinec (né Martinec), the Svengeal responsible for the group's songwriting, production, and existence (the constructed Exposé from the blueprints up, evidently stoned out of his mind on demographics: Ann Curless is the Anglo from Miami, Jeanette Jurado is the Latina from L.A., and Gioia Bruno stars as the Italian from Jersey).

Most importantly, though, in their best moments Exposé are what the Supremes used to be before they got Big Chilled into rock history's trophy case: the perfect soundtrack for a love hangover. On *What You Don't Know* one tale of hurt follows another until the whole thing collapses into a mass of teen-romantic Sturm und Drang. But not an undifferentiated mass—against the background of soupy ballads (modeled on Exposé's last big hit, "Seasons Change") and Martinec's credible clones of other hit producers' styles, the killer tracks stand out immediately. They're the ones that recall earlier hits



The GTOs.

like "Point Of No Return" and "Let Me Be The One," heavy-synth symphonies in which the girls alternately pour out their wounded hearts ("Let Me Down Easy," "Love Don't Hurt Until You Fall") or warn their lovers away from choices they might regret ("Stop Listen Look and Think," "What You Don't Know") while all around them MIDI works its wonders: locomotive drum tracks crackle and boom, ominous minor chords punch and glide. Taking turns on lead, the singers act out every love victim's fantasy come true: indulge your vulnerability to the hilt without fear, because having Martinec's blood-on-silicon arrangements swirling in the background is like having Robocop on your side.

—Julian Dibbell

The GTOs Permanent Damage Enigma Retro

Girls Together Outrageously: groups (among them, Pamela Des Barres) captured bonding by Frank Zappa as the 60s closed. If Prince was Princess, if Sandra Bernhard was 10 years older, if De La Soul was a group of old slugs from Los Angeles, if Robin Byrd had a sharp brain instead of a hot box, if the Slits had lived up to their name, if Bananarama would just take their panties off, if the Marx Brothers had made records, if Siouxsie Sioux would lighten up, for chrissakes, if Rick James really was a "Superfreak," if Madonna would show her true colors, if Cyndi Lauper

wasn't like a virgin, they still wouldn't crack me up as much as those wacky GTOs. R.I.P., gutzzz.

—Jane Garcia

The Doobie Brothers Cycles Capitol

As the first album directly inspired by AOR radio program directors—who look, not surprisingly, like the 1989 Doobs—this Doobie Brothers reunion album is definitive proof that the medium is the message. The first single, "The Doctor" (an unabashed paean to "good time rock'n'roll"), has placed our nation's FM soundwaves into an aural lockjaw. "There's a healing in these guitars," sing the pandering Doobers, "and a spirit in the song."

Cycles, however, lacks the solid-gold inlay of their past productions (producer Ted Templeman has been replaced)—the Rolls-Royce of American Bar Bands sounds more like a subcompact. The Doobies' spirit of the project and its stagnant sound make the recording almost Zen-like in its futility. At times, the music is so safe that it recalls the phlegmatic late-70s DBs sound of "What a Fool Believes" and "Minute by Minute."

Brothers fans may enjoy the faithful boogie-rock anthems, the laid-back group vocalizing (especially on "I Can Read Your Mind") and the good choice of cover material (the Four Tops' "One Chain Don't Make No Prison" and the Isleys' "Need A Little Taste of Love"). But the bulk of the work is quietly forget-

table—just another audio colorization, another 70s group with 80s drum samples, digital reverb and hi-gain guitar.

To be awakened from their legendary grave—like the Monkees or Moody Blues—and brought back to existence by an intravenous FM radio injection gives the Doobs a tragic finale. This digitalized Doobies (complete with anti-drug song) will fill any Brother with an overpowering sense of depression, an awareness that we are all trapped in a vortex of popular culture heading toward an outdated future.

—Rich Sim

The Original Sins The Hardest Way Psonik

On their 1987 debut single, the "Original Sins' I.T. sang the Archie's "Sugar Sugar" like what he really meant was *strychnine strychnine*. Flip



the record, and he was singing about a 14-year-old girl and the unspeakable things he wanted to do to her. "Just 14 and I don't care," he shrieked, tearing into the song like Godzilla into Tokyo. In late '87, the I.T. burst untended with 12 songs under the title *Big Soul*, the first mad rush of which was "Not Gonna Be All Right," a grimacing, howling release of a lifetime's worth of pent-up fury about dumb rock dogs telling I.T. that everything was going to be all right, when he knew better and was just waiting for the opportunity to say so. J.T. sang like he hated everything but 1989 and played guitar like he hated everything. The other Sins played like they believed everything he said.

So now they're back, with 19 songs this time (on CD and cassette, and it's, but it's worth it for the sound effects on the bonus track "Beast In Me"), and no label but their own; a little wizened from the wear and tear on their staunch-rockin' hearts. The songs fit more comfortably into standard 60s punk grooves, and I.T. sings as though, somewhere, between that record and this, for the first time ever he did what he was told. "Heard It All Before" isn't so much about the futility of playing rock'n'roll a good 22 years too late as it is about the simple frustra-

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tion at being like everybody else. "Rat-her Be Sad" sums up the J.T. school of defiance in plain terms: "I'd rather be sad/It's really not so bad/in fact it's all I ever had in this world," with a little gloating melodic warp tagged onto the last word. The album ends with "End Of The World," and the band screams through it like they're in the home stretch of a mile in a race against themselves. J.T., for his part, gets off on the apocalypse trip, if only because he's got his girl with him: "I knew we could make it if we tried/One more time before we died." It's no lie. His whole career's been building up to it.

—Karen Schoemer

Special Ed Youngest In Charge Profile

He's the new Max Ajak in the show. "So?" That's what I said till he went platinum overnight, bum-rushed MTV and put the bush (Flatbush, Brooklyn, that is) back on the map. Hiz style iz that of a Jedi, slick and smooth. Wit' DJ Akshun and producer Howie Tee the real message iz the nice B. He cumz in wit' boucary beats and fresh rhyme treats. The versatility of Ed Archer iz that he can switch from house back to hip hop. Like in the jam "Club Scene," Akshun cut what sounds like salsa wit' club beats blended wit' hip hop. But that ain't all, y'all! He can chat like a dreed and still rock the mike (like in "Heds And Dreds"). Couple of months ago, there wuz a show he attended where he wuz accompanied by Kool G. Rap, MC Lyte, Chubb Rock and others. Guess what, Ed had the best show in the house. So see, it's more than beats and rhymes, it's an attitude. Hiz iz that of a militant,



violent and merciless MC. Unfortunately, this renegade attitude iz gettin' him paid. Yo, I can't front: the style iz swellin' but hiz rhymes iz fly. As the cheers grow keepin' I keep thinkin' the real kritics are those who buy the records, not get them for free, like me. Ya see, in a word, Special Ed iz depeit

—Bönz Malone

Bullet LaVolta The Gift Taangl

Last year's debut EP from Boston's Bullet LaVolta revealed how much passion and contempt two guitars can scrape off the bottom of the punk rock frying pan. Old hat to some listeners, the noise still affirms something troubling and sweet. Bullet LaVolta has since set-

tled down with Moving Targets guitarist Ken Chambers and hit upon a ruthless sound: Bill Whelan's bass is all pumping affirmation while the guitars just shred the bump-and-grind catchiness of romps like "Mother Messiah" and "The Gift." The commotion guitarists Chambers and Clay Tarver get going across the rambunctious bottom like napalm butterscotch.

Bullet LaVolta sound like Good Boys with Evil Machines. They don't affect anguish, it just steams out of the amps and gets them all soggy. They look dismal by the end of a set. On record, the boys are even more earnest, and the machines get even angrier. Guitars howl in frustration, strain to reach the melodies. The way each song's wholesome intention gets corrupted by its own transgression gives *The Gift* a massive guitar squall with a personality. Riffs clash like that old joke about the fight that occasionally breaks into a hockey game.

On the lead-off track, "X-Fire," the guitar bites off chunks from the flanks of Ratt and Minor Threat, too much sex for hardcore, too much wit for metal. Vocalist Yuki Gipe is haunted by the Stooges' Fun House, except he sounds more like the saxophone than like Iggy. It



vocals. When Yuki thrusts his mike into the audience, he isn't inviting them to sing along—he's trying to get that poisoned machine out of his face and into the world where it can't hurt him. It

doesn't seem to work. Yuki sings about his mother a lot. Maybe that's his deal with all the mascara.

But this is a boys' album, crammed with boys' concerns and drive. It's the roar, not the songwriting, that makes *The Gift* so compelling. The more you listen as the gorgeous acoustic interlude in "Little Tiny Pieces" collapses. Into genuinely wrecked feedback and party-killer guitar, the more you hear the Evil Machines and the Good Boys as actually sustaining each other. In the conflict at the heart of Bullet LaVolta's sound there's a wicked creative power, and if Ken and Yuki and the band keep letting the machines smear the pop mascara, we can look forward to more passion, more contempt, more guitars. (Taangl, P.O. Box 51, Auburndale, MA 02166)

—Robert Sheffield

Kool Moe Dee Knowledge Is King Jive/RCA

Heavy D. & the Boyz Big Tyme Uptown/MCA

Teddy Riley's slick production on Kool Moe Dee's "They Want Money" and Heavy D's "We Got Our Own Thing" adds a subtlety and chill to hip hop that has more to do with the movements of rhythm, melody, and texture than with the usual beats and fresh rhymes. On these albums, he brings new jack swing's addition of hip hop to R&B full circle; he's not just injecting new juice into a tiring form, he's bringing accessibility to an emerging one.

On other tracks produced by Marley

Little Sutt's Quest for Music by Mark Blackwell



Marl and the Boyz's own DJ Eddie F., Big Time swings new jack style all the way through. Heavy D. sincerely loves to party, and his themes—searching for true love, broken heartedness, and sex



appeal—may shine with the characteristic hip hop braggadocio on the surface, but the self-named Heavyweight Lover isn't afraid to temper his boasts with a down-to-earth vulnerability or to revel in his own sentimentalism. Though Heavy D. raps his songs (boasts on the reggae-inflected "Mood for Love"), the attitude and approach, not to mention the dapper suits D. and the Boyz model on the cover, owe more to R&B than to hardcore hip hop.

Oozing out of couplet after staccato couplet of Kool Moe Dee's Knowledge Is King is a take-no-shorts attitude that's steeped in hip hop like a tea bag in hot water. There is, of course, the requisite boasting, but this old-school rapper avoids the formulaic, infusing each song with wit and a bit of brain food to chew on: "I ain't goin', I'm gone up, up, up and away and I'm on/a higher plane/with a brain/with a flame/feel the fire." If it sounds like he's on his own tip, he is. And not without good reason; Kool Moe Dee is perhaps the most articulate, level-headed rapper around. With minimalist production, plenty of bass and the street knowledge of his native Boogie Down Bronx, Moe Dee reaches out to the new jack aesthetic (though he'd never admit it) on his own well-conceived terms.

—Ben Mapp

Dolly Parton
White Limozeen
Columbia

Dolly Parton was the only real folk-rock of the 60s, going straight from the east Tennessee mountains (where kids were sung to sleep with the kind of ancient Scottish border ballads that guys like Bob Dylan and Roger McGuinn learned from coffeehouse songbooks) into the highly commercial Nashville studios; emerging with a new kind of roots-pop made up of haunting, modal hill music and a tough, soulful,

ambitious woman's response to the city. But then there was cartoon "Hee-Haw" Dolly, hungry as all oversized dizzy blonde America, who wanted it all, and who, in the 70s, sold the coat of many colors to get it.

Now Dolly wants to Get Back. So she's got Ricky Skaggs, Nashville's austere arbiter of roots authenticity, to produce. And while the band Skaggs put together doesn't get the shivaree-gone-electric ambience of some of Dolly's original sidemen, it's amazing what conviction and authority flood back into Dolly's singing as soon as she's in a traditional context. Like someone recovering from a decade-long episode of hebephrenia, there's a seriousness you'd have thought would by now be completely beyond her, her reedy mountain voice cutting like an astringent through the glottal chirpiness that's made her unlistenable for so long. "Time For Me To Fly" (yup, the REO hit) works like magic. Dolly singing lines like "I make you laugh and you make me cry" like they were written for her, giving her man some sass back, as the Skaggs band gets hot as blazes.

But my favorite is "He's Alive." It's the least traditional (it's got synths), but its mysterioso religiosity lets in the spooky otherliness that used to blow through Dolly songs. When Dolly ends this evangelical blowout with an orgasmic "Sweet Jesus!" it's coming from a place where the backwoods touch the great beyond; a great American voice returns to itself, if only for the moment.

—Christopher Hill



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Phranc: living out the politics of shamelessness.

Phranc *I Enjoy Being A Girl* Island

It seems to me that the best politics are the politics of shamelessness, which Phranc lives out courageously. She says in her press release, "Maybe a little cologne is acceptable but I've never had any desire to wear earrings." It takes guts to stick to those instincts. I know even the rebelst gals among us have felt deep shame for wanting to dress like a boy all the time. And dang if our lesbian culture doesn't encourage that shame. Teresa Trull and Holly start blow-drying their hair and all of a sudden it's "oppressive" or worse yet, "unattractive" to dress butchly. I love 'em to pieces, but sometimes my sisters can get so wonky as to discourage difference. It's precisely why we need womyn like Phranc so bad.

Phranc's songs have a refreshing hint of self-parody, while at the same time being more unapologetically queer than nearly all "women's music." In this album's ode to rippling lesbian muscle,

"M-A-R-T-I-N-A," Phranc updates us between verses on the tennis queen's love life ("Now she lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with Judy Nelson! Who bought her a horse for her last birthday!"). It's so liberating to know that someone else is as obsessed as I am with every detail of lesbian culture.

Phranc, who got her start in the late 70s LA punk scene, probably doesn't classify herself as a "women's musician." But she did play Michigan. I should mention that her music is not "for lesbians only." Most of the songs don't have anything to do with being a lesbian. Almost all of them do, however, have a political bent. "Take Off Your Swastika" addresses the punksters who say, "Phranc it's just a symbol, it's just an emblem! It's just a righteous declaration!" to which she responds, in her characteristic no-bones-about-it style, "Well it means a little more to me! Cuz I'm a Jewish lesbian you see." And the title song takes a deep cut at the current trendiness of folksinging. This is Phranc at her most bitter: "Androgyny's

the ticket/At least it seems to be/just don't wear a flat top/And mention sexuality/And girl you'll go far/You'll get a record contract/You'll be a star." Bitter, yes, but right on.

As on her first album, 1985's *Folsinger*, there's at least one haunting beauty to counteract the satire and social critique. "Myriam and Esther" is a moving lament about ungracefully aging grandmothers. Phranc sheds the wintry voice and lets the raw one emerge, showing she can wall about sorrow as well as cut up. In "Double Decker Bed" too, she sings sweetly and sadly about love lost.

Seductive, pretty, these will please anybody. But most of Phranc's songs have a high goof content. "Toy Time"—an ode to Toys R Us—is for Tom Lehrer or Jonathan Richman fans. Clever lyrics alone ("All the employees wear orange and white/When they put wisecracking Alf upon the shelf at night") are not enough. Phranc's mere existence, though, is deeply inspiring. Her flat top and overt inversion may prevent her catapult to fame, but we should, in the meantime, enjoy her wit and courage.

—Dominique Dibbell

can road-lust: "Run! Run! Try to catch the sun/Don't be slack/The Great Sorrow is on your track." Along with heat, highways, Reno and trains, Thomas folds his funny mind into sad songs about love, and the two concerns col-



lide in "Flat." After telling us that in 1905 the only two cars in the state of Kansas ran into each other, Thomas ties this fact to life's hot concrete: "For some reason I thought about you/And me/And remember that day/As if my life were flat." Like a circus troupe soaring over the prairie in biplanes, Pere Ubu has a strange perspective on the land, and it gives them a lot of space.

—Erik Davis

Pere Ubu Cloudland PolyGram

Cloudland is a festive Art-O-Rama of heart and heartland, as fun as Dunchamp dancing in the dustbowl ("The Waltz": the bride swayed barefoot, there on the sidewalk/You could fry an egg"). The Cleveland band's usual boisterous chaos is dimmed, the brilliant arms-akimbo art hippy drumming of Henry Cow alum Chris Cutler condenses to a tangible thump, and Thomas's pinched bird cries slip into conventional vowels with the aggressive amusement of a boho donning a business suit for fun. But *Cloudland* sounds less like a departure than a generous ephocopy of the poppier particles of earlier Ubu, and they remain a bunch of weird white eggheads, their songs tense music machines constructed out of minimalist art-rock, tangled rhythms, sculpted coultures, and singer David Thomas's whimsical mel-ancholy. Even the four songs spruced up by Stephen Hague (Pet Shop Boys/New Order) are swimming in the electronic ecotoplasia of synthesized Alan Ravens-tine's archaic white noise.

Ubu's attitude towards the hooks, old songs and catchy choruses that pepper *Cloudland* is similar to the hooks of Americana many of the lyrics explore: objects to toy with, turn over, squeeze for a sad voice or an odd point of view. In "Race the Sun," he undercuts Ameri-

Fetchin' Bones Monster Capitol

Monster, its timing notwithstanding, is not this North Carolina band's hop on the big rock bandwagon; it's the first successful vinyl distillation of their riff-heavy, metalfunk swirl. Fetchin' Bones have never (not, at least, since the '86 rift that halved the band) stacked neatly in college radio's Lego kit. They've always been far more likely to play the Big Bad Wolf, blowing down Stipe-striped houses with guitarist Errol Stewart's backhoe riffs and lungfuls of bloopie blown hurricane-force from the innards of vocalist Hopie Nicholls.

Focal vocals bein' essential to the whole Big Rock picture (and its Cult following), it's not surprising that producer Ed Stasium (Living Colour) homes in on Nicholls's moonshine-fed Pentecostalism. She's everywhere—shimmying down the greased rift-poles of "Bone-woy" (a multi-lingual hyperspeed burst that brings "Wooly Bully" into the space age); sizzling like the fat dripping off a fresh-kilt pig onto the burning hick-ory of "Mr. Bad"; even pausing for a patch of dew ("Deep Blue") before jumping back into the fray, hair flying.

Of course, it might take some image "fairy" to endear Fetchin' Bones to the mano-shaking masses, but scarves around the mike or not, "Love Crushin'"

is a nach'l. For open-hatchback cruisin'. For stadium-stage struttin'. For spinning as a last ditch effort to get some (fill in your pelvic product of choice) on a steamy summer's eve. But be forewarned—if you use it for the latter, at least—it'll work. There's hoodoo in them grooves.

—David Sprague

Band of Susans Love Agenda Blast First/Restless

Band of Susans, a co-ed New York City quintet, have put more electric guitar on one record than any other band I've ever heard. Pop this beast of a tape in your car's system and blow your hardtop straight into the 1990s. Whether you listen to this punk rock with new tunings, AOR with tension and thunder, or metal that's actually heavy and brainy, this is rock and roll for the new decade—if not exactly the beat Sam Phillips had in mind, kissing cousins in attitude.

"Sin Embargo" is awash with guitars like a butcher dripping with blood at the end of a workday; one guitar lays down fuzz behind everything, while another spins out riffs, and a third just shoots out stingers. There's no room for vocals. No room on "Because of You" either, but the three guitarists sing, and it works great. As the album's pop song, it wears its guitar hook like a nose ring: smack in the center, attracting attention.

Because they live in the same city as Sonic Youth, Band of Susans gets tagged as "white noise," but I don't buy it. This is music to be noticed, to give you a jolt, to lash as you turn around to see what it is.



On the Stones' "Child Of The Moon" (which didn't make the vinyl format) the Susans pit three huge electric guitars against everyone's favorite childhood instrument, a recorder. It's like watching a dwarf come out to do battle with a sumo wrestler. That tension is genius; you've just got to hear it.

—Robert Gordon

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UNDERGROUND



The Fleshtones: Their best song in six years is on the Kinks compilation *Shangri-la*.

Couch Flambeau, Roky Erickson
fan club, *Kirchenmusik!*,
Absolute Grey, Nick Saloman,
Kinks compilation

Column by Byron Coley

Even on a day as hot as today, I'd rather be a porker than someone no more substantial than Steve Albini. So would you. And so would Jay Tiller,

friend of Albini's, and leader of Milwaukee's *Couch Flambeau*. Indeed, the subtitle of *Couch Flambeau*'s long-awaited third LP, *Ghost Ride* (It's Only A Record, 8640 N. Servite Dr., Milwaukee, WI 53223), is that the aforementioned Chicago toothpick is headed for a fall. Listen to Jay's beautifully poignant guitar work on the version of "Cast Your Fate To The Wind," study the cover drawing and imagine Albini's moped and borsolino flying over the edge of a high cliff. It's sounds like these that dreams are made of, and Jacob Tiller is a master of wise-guy invention. His style is a bit reminiscent of Chris Osgood's back in the heyday of the Suicide Commandos — Jay's a guitar player with such faultless rock-grounded technique and nonstop smirkage that you figure he's pulling a fast one on ya. He's not, though. He's just pulling. Jay's

falsestoid vocals may take a little getting used to, and people bugged by lyricists more resolutely clever than themselves should stay clear, but *Ghost Ride* is Couch's best wax yet. If the thought of truly loopy Midwestern punk shit is at all appealing, you should bust a pup with this one.

The Friends of Roky Erickson is a fan club, organized by Pete Flanagan and run through Zippo Music, which any serious Roky devotee should consider joining. Membership is a bit steep (\$40 c/o Zippo, P.O. Box 2401, Austin, TX 78768), but Roky gets a cut of the cash and the membership package is amazing. You get a booklet with illustrated lyrics, flyer reprints, a portfolio cut in the shape of Roky's profile containing pics and a complete discography, plus an exclusive LP with a Savage Pencil cover and excellent sound — half live in 1975 (with some otherwise unreleased songs), half an interview from '81 or so. It's a gorgeous piece of lovin' devotion, dedicated to a guy who deserves every buck and

good thought you can toss his way. Membership is limited to 1,000 worldwide and further goodies are promised. Based on Zippo's fine track record I suspect they'll come through.

Kirchenmusik! (Also import, available via NMDS, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012) is a very sweet record of guitar solos and duets recorded by **Toto Blanke** (a German) and **Rudolph Dasek** (a Czech). Judging by the cover, the disk looks as if it will be teeming with heaving outside splurge, on the order of Hans Reichel or something, but the acoustic guitars hidden inside manifest a shimmer that's closer to John Fahey. Primitive string attack is the seeming cornerstone, but this foundation gets heaped with lotsa other style-stuff. There's a distinct classical/flamenco knife-stroke to some of the performances, and other passages veer off into the unbeaten grass-clump jungle the cover hints at. Suffice to say that this is a very difficult album to quantify. These two guys have absorbed more differentiated guitar

styles than anyone this side of Glenn Jones, and their work is a soundly surprising jack-box of well-sprung gags n' beauty. Fans of nimble modern guitar should dig it.

Absolute Grey was a great, frosty folk-psych-pop unit with a sound rooted in the best elements of LA's class of '81 (drummer Pat Thomas even ran the Dream Syndicate fan club). The upstate New York quartet folded up their wings a few years back, amidst a storm of indifference, but now that (hopefully) people have forgotten that they didn't give a shit, a Greek label (Di Di, 18 Douk. Plakentias str., 11523 Athens, Greece) has assembled a choice AG live album, *A Journey Thru The Past*. The tunes are culled from the band's early repertoire (including a nice rip into the Dream Syndicate's "Halloween") and the combination of Beth Brown's iceberged vox and Matt Kitchen's post-Percolan guitar whump is a treat to hear. It simultaneously approaches and transcends the whole college-rock-motom thing, filling everything it touches with a personal, elegant light.

Englishman Nick Saloman runs a label called Woronzon, puts out wild solo records under the name **Bevis Frond**, and generally seems to have his fingers in more pies than Simple fuckin' Simon. Every time I turn around there seem to be another slew of records with his name lurking on 'em somewhere and I've got three at my fingertips right now. The first is the Nick & Nick & The *Psychotic Drivers* (Contempo, P.O. Box 1369, Vienne, Italy). Recorded while Nick was on holiday in Italy, it consists of heavy ballroom-style jamming with an Italian psych band called the **Soul**

Hunters. Some nearly ridiculous vocals have been grafted on top, which alters the shape of what might've been a truly stumping instrumental outing. Still, when the "dot's deep in my forehead" it's hard to belittle this disk's guttural pew-wall. **Outskirts of Infinity**, meanwhile, are a band in which Nick plays bass. Their second album, *Scenes From The Dreams Of Angels* (Infinity), shows their strength as a psych-power trio born in the valley of Hendrix. Loud and slinky, *Scenes* is notable for a stomping version of John's Children's legendary banned tune, "Desdemona." ("Lift up your skirts and speak.") And Bevis himself has recently had his double-record vault-cleaner, *Though The Looking Glass*, reissued by Reckless (1401 Haight St., San Francisco, CA 94117). This sprawling collection of bits and pieces was originally released a couple years back, in an edition of 500, with the idea that it'd be of interest to fans only. Whatever, the screamingly sustained, meat-chopping guitarwork racing around these grooves can now be heard by most any householder who cares to see the frontiers of 1971 pushed into an alternate future. Reckless has also reissued the other three Bevis LPs, *Miasma*, *Inner Marshland* and *Triptych*—start with *Triptych*, it's got the most self-contained power. After that, as always, you're on your own.

Alan Duffy's first compilation, *Beyond The Wild Wood*, was a great compendium of Syd Barrett tunes, but his second, *Fast'n'Bulbous* (a set of Beeheart covers) fell far short of its mark. His third effort, *Shangrila: A Tribute To The Kinks* (Imaginary) Communion, P.O. Box 95265, Atlanta, GA 30347), is totally up to snuff, because Ray Davies (like Barrett) is a consummate pop-song craftsman. It's pleasing that not everybody included chose to maul the band's lauded early bashers. A few hands turn the Kinks' mid-period fruit-pop (and even Dave Davies's "Suzanne's Still Alive") into personal adventures. And even songs that have been done to death ("I'm Not Like Everybody Else") are shown to be harboring new life in dark places. Some of these versions are not necessarily the best Kinks covers ever (I'd opt for Yo La Tengo's "Big Sky" over the Mock Turtles', and the Raincoats' "Lola" over Cud's), but this is a wonderfully solid record with way-above-average performances all around (the Fleshtones cover of "Too Much On My Mind" is the best thing they've recorded in five or six years). Now if only Duffy'd do a Michael Hurley set.

Well, time to go fry some eggs on my car. Peace, baby. Nude photographs gratefully accepted at P.O. Box 301, W. Somerville, MA 02144.

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SINGLES

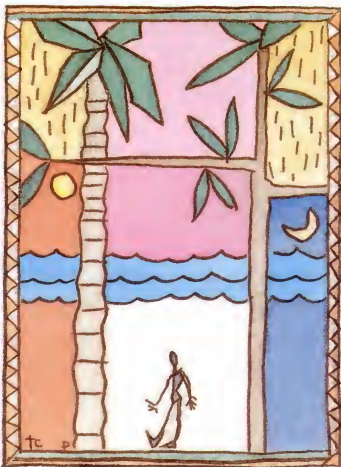
Hope I Get Old Before I Die

When Simple Minds' single, "Mandela," came out in England, it entered the charts at No. 1. Slow and mournful, overwrought but not cathartic, it had as little to do with English pop as it did American. But there was Jim Kerr at the center, an icon with an attitude, a Glasgow tough exorcising his properly working-class demons.

In America, where Jim Kerr is just another English guy, the single and the album, *Street Fighting Years*, went out like a couple of brick parachutes. Kerr and his band became the first dropouts from the Amnesty generation. They care, but we, as a whole, don't. Kerr, a little younger than Sting or Peter Gabriel, got caught between generations, addressing an audience one way when it now expected to be addressed in another, and got left out in the cold.

Compare "Mandela" to Gabriel's "Biko," which was not a hit here, but remains the monumental song "Mandela" will never be; it launched the Amnesty generation. Both songs are well-crafted dingies for South African activists. But there's a difference in the way they work. Where Gabriel reaches out to Steven Biko—musically and lyrically—and the song resolves with a sense of loss, Kerr stewes in his own potent juices, building a sense of his larger-than-life inner turmoil. His is an unlenient position. The song is a standard rock gambit, an escape into the mythic. Like the Bruce Springsteen of *Born to Run*, Kerr offers a bogus liberation from the mundane, a relief from life. No adolescent could ask for more. But for 1989, it is all wrong.

Unnoticed, or virtually unnoticed, the second generation of rock'n'roll adults has established a new relationship between performer and audience. They were the arty young men of the 70s, now balding and moving gracefully toward their 40s: Sting, Gabriel, and David Byrne. The first generation to inherit the idea that youth is impossible, they are also the first to have found a way to grow



old as rock'n'rollers.

Except briefly during the punk era, they never had a youth culture, so they don't bring any baggage or promises into their middle years. They never sang, "Hope I die before I get old." As the Who and the Stones struggle under the threat of looking ridiculous, tied to a generation that valued youth above anything else, the next easily embrace responsibilities. The Stones and the Who have to measure up to their pasts—to match the energy and excitement that once

threatened to change the world, and in fact did. The slightly newer jacks have the option not to grow old with the music they grew up with. Instead of hanging on to adolescence, their generation—the root of the yuppie generation—leaped into adulthood even before they had to. Sting, Byrne and Gabriel never distinguished what they do from work. When David Byrne sang, 11 years ago, "Watch me work," it was both a rhythm and blues reference and a literal directive. For this generation, rock'n'roll

Column by John Leland

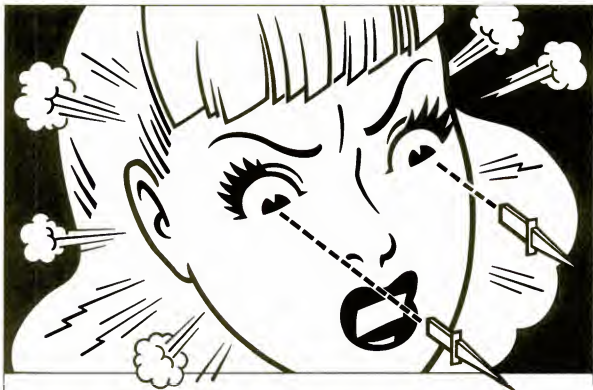
is not an alternative to growing up. This means a new relationship with the audience. The Stones and the Who offered an escape from responsibility. Liberation was the key, and rock musicians were the avatars. They weren't really role models, because they led fantasy lives: you couldn't be like them if you wanted to. They were vicarious inspirations, temporary vacations from mundane daily life. The rest of us, one way or another, had to grow up. If people ridicule the old coots now, it is partly for the awkward revelation that the coots, contrary to what they claimed, were aging at the same pace as everybody else—that the escape wasn't real.

The middle guys, by contrast, offer not escape but ways to run your life. They have made their private choices public, and anyone can seek guidance in them. Scary as it might be—especially to Rosanna Arquette—on some scale, any of us could be Peter Gabriel: exploring different musics, more as student than master, and making basic ethical decisions according to a coherent moral philosophy. For all his struggles, musical and lyrical, we join him not in his victories but in his courage to make the effort. It is a 70s idea grown up, come to fruition media-wise as the 80s come to a close.

Someone tell Jim Kerr: In the Amnesty generation, rock doesn't offer an escape, a temporary trip into the untenable; it offers a set of models by which people can guide their lives. There's something sad and wonderful about this.

THE A-LIST:

Kraze, "Let's Play House" (Big Beat)
Prince, "Batdance" (Wamer)
Aretha Franklin with Whitney Houston, "It Isn't, It Wasn't, It Ain't Never Gonna Be" (Arista)
Public Enemy, "Fight the Power" (Motown)
Living Colour, "Open Letter (To a Landlord)" (Epici)
Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam, "Just Git It Together" (Columbia)



SHE SHIFTED UNCOMFORTABLY IN HER SEAT. HER BACK CLUNG TO THE SIMULATED VINYL. A BEAD OF SWEAT DRIPPED OFF HER CHIN. THEN, IN A FLASH, IT CAME TO HER. BINGO! (TO BE CONTINUED)

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are not anti-anybody. We are pro-black, pro-black culture and pro-human race, and that's been said before many times. Professor Griff's responsibility as Minister of Information for Public Enemy was to faithfully transmit those values to everybody. In practice, he sabotaged those values." All of this, at least in its official version, came as news to both Flavor Flav and Griff, who did not know about the firing until Chuck D. made it public. His most moving comment, lost in the commotion, was that when the press conference was over, he would have to explain his action to the black community. As Stephney tried to close the very brief question-and-answer session, Armond White of the black advocacy weekly, *The City Sun*, asked Chuck D. if he wasn't just knuckling under to outside pressure.

Immediately after the conference, in a private room, Chuck D. flew into a rage. He had feared this reaction from black America all along. Under duress like few of us ever experience, he had just fired his friend, in a manner he must have known to be cowardly, for reasons that no one would ever accept. He had done the right thing, or at least a justifiable thing. But he did it too late: a year too late to persuade any but the most generous observers that he was firing Griff for moral reasons, out of umbrage at Griff's anti-Semitism. He had made no public apologies when the remarks appeared overseas, on a small local TV station, or in a *Mojo* paper; now that they were on MTV, he was offended. He also ignored his own responsibility in the matter: knowing that given an opportunity, Griff was likely to attack Jews, Chuck D. gave Griff that opportunity. In his coverage of the conference, White called the dismissal of Professor Griff—as an alternative to addressing the real and thorny issue of historical tension between blacks and Jews—"the most terrible example of sellout I have witnessed in my lifetime." White called Carlton Ridenhour "another bought, whipped slave."

It was the worst of scenarios. People Chuck D. did not care about except professionally considered him an anti-Semite for remarks he did not make; it was a charge he would never escape. People he cared about, politically and abstractly, considered him a sellout, maybe a whipped slave. His childhood friend probably considered him a coward and an asshole, a traitor to the truth. And other close friends, as well as close business associates, knew that he had had opportunities to defuse the problem altogether, but had either added to it or avoided it.

In private, after the press conference, he disbanded Public Enemy. He made the announcement on MTV and on black radio the following morning.

"We got sandbagged," he said. "And being that we got sandbagged, the group is over today. It's out of here. . . . We stepped out of the music business as a boycott of the music industry—management, the record companies, the industry, retailers—[now] everybody [is] involved in the enforcement for us to make a decision for our group instead of us carrying out our disciplining of a person in our group our way." On the black-owned New York radio station WBSL-FM, he said that the group had been "whitballed," inventing race marketing copy to do the deed. Privately, Chuck D. said that Griff sabotaged the group out of jealousy.

Even the announcement that Public Enemy had disbanded did not abate the hysteria, which by now had its own momentum. The death threats continued, as did the flow of contradictory and even false information. Chuck D. told MTV's Kurt Loder

that Columbia "has the next [Public Enemy] album [*Fear of a Black Planet*], and won't let it go." This was patently untrue. Greene Street Studios in SoHo had not even scheduled Public Enemy to begin final work until July, and has since pushed the dates back to August. This was the sort of falsehood that could be easily checked; sources inside Def Jam, Columbia, Rush and PE's independent publicist all contradicted Chuck D.'s claim. Though he denies this to be the case, part of Chuck D.'s problem all along may be that he expects not to be challenged. For all his belligerence on

"Let's talk about something else, let's talk about basketball," says Chuck D., as his group crumbles.

record and video, in conversation he is a windy but also very friendly man, with his own blunt charm (we met for the first time after he had publicly threatened me on several occasions; in person, he managed to backpedal from his threats without losing face). He is not antagonistic except in private or when surrounded only by allies. He and Public Enemy have taken on giants, but only from a distance; Chuck D. does not say a taste for the give-and-take of debate. (Griff does, and has the resources for it, which may explain why Chuck D. avoided him for so long.) "Chuck's the kind of guy," says Shocklee, "that'll beat your ass, and the next day say, 'whassup?' Griff'll beat your ass and not say anything."

Around the group, the maelstrom continued to swirl. It was, as critic Robert Christgau pointed out, almost exactly 10 years since Elvis Costello had referred to Ray Charles as "a blind, ignorant nigger" (and 11 years since Mick Jagger had sung, on the title track to the Rolling Stones' *Some Girls* album, "Black girls just wanna get fucked all night," and easily brushed off the Reverend Jesse Jackson's attempts to get the group banned from black radio). Public Enemy's slurs caused a louder bang.

On the group's behalf, Sharpton announced a June 28 rally at Brooklyn's Slave Theater to protest the role of Jews in stifling an important black voice, and threatened direct action against Columbia. "I think that unquestionably the whole record and movie industry is controlled by Jews and unquestionably [Public Enemy] have been targeted by that power group," Sharpton told Smith, just days before being indicted on 67 counts of fraud and misconduct. "It's cool," says Chuck D. "We've dealt with him before." But according to Shocklee, the secretary from Public Enemy's office sent Sharpton a request to cancel the rally. Even Griff did not attend.

On Friday, June 23, the group performed an unscheduled set at an N.W.A. concert at the Philadelphia Spectrum, announcing that it was their last show ever. Griff was in the wings, but did not go onstage. A week later, they performed again in Chicago—to fulfill a prior commitment, according to Chuck D.—while in Chicago, Griff and Chuck D. met with Farrakhan, who reportedly slapped their wrists and told them they were in over their heads, that they were not ready to address the issues they had raised. He also told Chuck D. that if the rapper was going to be a leader, he should lead his group. It was the first sound judgment anyone had offered.

Stripped to its basics, this is a vicious recasting of a familiar rock'n'roll story: petty jealousy and resentment come between friends once they become successful, and a group gets eaten up by its own notoriety. "It was journalistic wilding," says Stephney, another PE member eager to shrug off responsibility that, as the incident proves, cannot be shrugged off. The same mechanisms that blew the group up larger than life also blew up its mistakes; Public Enemy, like many acts or public figures before them, tried to resolve or ignore those problems as if they still existed on a small scale.

The remaining questions inspire only banal solutions or simple recastings. Why did the group wait so long to fire Griff? According to Shocklee and Stephney, they were at first confused as to why Griff, knowing the severity of the situation, had made the comments. No one was talking to Griff. "Finally I just asked him," says Stephney. "I said, 'Do you really believe that Jews cause the majority of wickedness across the globe?' He said, 'No, that's silly. I was just having a bad day. I was mad at the group.'" Once they learned this, they say, they moved to fire Griff.

As to whether they knuckled in to outside pressure, the question assumes a faulty metaphor. As a pop act and a business, Public Enemy exists less as an entity than as a series of relationships, some accidental; the polarity between inside and outside does not hold. Chuck D.'s biggest regret was the turmoil he had caused Spike Lee. Shocklee says, "You had death threats in people's homes. We work in a studio where people bring their babies. What if some crazy person threw a bomb in there? Don't talk to me about knuckling under."

Meanwhile, Chuck D. has a short vacation in Roosevelt, his first in a long time. "Over the last two years," he says, "I've spent more time with the group than with my family. That's changing lately." He is planning to buy a house in the next few months. He also talks of changing Griff's status to probation; more than anything, he wants the group back as it was.

The negotiations with MCA are still moving forward. "If you took a poll of black people in Illinois," says Chuck D., "they wouldn't know any emotional had happened. You should go, out there and do a survey. My album had its best five-day period while all this was going on. I'm about to have the number one 12-inch in the history of Motown Records. Everything already is as it was." It was an encore of the bluster in the face of reality that had allowed all the problems in the first place, or maybe just a little attitude for a reporter. Either way, it takes a *Nation of Millions* to *Hold Us Back*, which had been selling at around 4,000 copies per week—"That record was dead," says Russell Simmons—per week.

Fear of a Black Planet is still scheduled for October release, with a single, "911 is a joke" backed with "Revolutionary Generation," optimistically slated for August, though the group has remained out of contact with Columbia. Chuck D. says he has not made up his mind whether the latter song will be about RJ Smith. Also in the works is a Flavor Flav solo album. "Nobody hates me," the rapper told Russell Simmons. "I'm Flavor the Friendly Ghost."

As the incident blew over, at least for the moment, even Mordcha Lev moved on. The new message on his answering machine ran, "Finally, Al Sharpton, the anti-Semitic windbag, has been arrested. Let's go to the trial and make sure justice is done, and Sharpton is thrown into jail. If you're interested in marching on his home with us, leave your name and number at the sound of the tone. . . . Sharpton hates Jews, but we hate Al Sharpton. Thank you, and never again."

IT WAS A HUMID EVENING LIKE ANY
OTHER, EXCEPT THAT IT WAS HOT.
I WAS WORKING ON A CASE THAT
WAS HOT, BUT HAD NOTHING AT ALL
TO DO WITH HUMIDITY.
(TO BE CONTINUED.)



TOP 20

**VIDEO
COUNT
DOWN**

**WATCH
TOP 20
VIDEO
COUNT
DOWN**

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4 PM/3 CENTRAL
AND SUNDAY AT
11 AM/10 CENTRAL
ONLY ON MTV.**



TDK PRESENTS COLLEGE RADIO TOP 30

1. **PIXIES**, *Doolittle*, 4AD-Elektra
2. **PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED**, 9, Virgin
3. **BOB MOULD**, *Workbook*, Virgin
4. **LOVE AND ROCKETS**, *Love And Rockets*, RCA
5. **WIRE**, *It's Beginning To And Back Again*, Mute-Enigma
6. **THE CURE**, *Disintegration*, Elektra
7. **10,000 MANIACS**, *Blind Man's Zoo*, Elektra
8. **PERE UBU**, *Cloudland*, Fontana-PG
9. **NAKED RAYGUN**, *Understand?*, Caroline
10. **TIN MACHINE**, *Tin Machine*, EMI
11. **RAMONES**, *Brain Drain*, Sire-WB
12. **24-7 SPYZ**, *Harder Than You, In Effect/Relativity*
13. **ADRIAN BELEW**, *Mr. Music Head*, Atlantic
14. **LEMONHEADS**, *Lick*, Epic
15. **THE THE**, *Mind Bomb*, Epic
16. **GODFATHERS**, *More Songs About Love & Hate*, Epic
17. **HAPPY FLOWERS**, *Oof*, Homestead
18. **ALL**, *Altroy's Revenge*, Cruz
19. **ROYAL CRESCENT MOB**, *Spin The World*, Sire-Reprise
20. **CONCRETE BLONDE**, *Free*, I.R.S.
21. **DARLING BUDS**, *Pap Said*, Columbia
22. **BULLET LAVOLTA**, *The Gift, Taang!*
23. **DINOSAUR JR.**, *"Just Like Heaven" 12"*, SST
24. **PUSSY GALORE**, *Dial "M" For Motherfucker*, Caroline
25. **MARY M HOPE**, *Museum*, Silverstone-RCA
26. **PETER GABRIEL**, *Passion*, Geffen
27. **MORRISSEY**, *"Interesting Drug" 12"*, Sire-Reprise
28. **PHRANC**, *I Enjoy Being A Girl*, Island
29. **SWANS**, *The Burning World*, UNI-MCA
30. **THE B-52'S**, *Cosmic Thing*, Reprise



The Who from page 42

"So why don't you?"
"Listen you want the ticket or not?"
"Yeah. I want it."
I studied the ticket in his hand. It actually was an orchestra seat. Unbelievable.
"Shit. The cops are looking at us. Keep walking. Gimme the money."
"Give me the ticket first."
He handed me the ticket.
"Keep looking straight ahead. They're watching."
I clutched the ticket and handed him the money.
I looked at it and spun around, stunned. It was a '84 Cats ticket, a year old no less. And jumping Jack Flash was gone. Vanished in less than two seconds.
"AAAAAAAASSSSSSSSSSHOLE!" I bellowed.

Giants Stadium: July 3, 1989

I have a ticket this time. A real ticket. I'm with my sister. We're psyched. We both bought Maximum R&B Who T-shirts for \$20. On my way up in the escalator this guy behind me is holding his fists up in the air and just screaming out loud like he's getting stabbed or something. And this is before we're even in the stadium. When they finally hit the stage every last person just stands up and screams. Even me, sophisticated cookie who thought she had grown out of this supergroup hysteria bit years ago.

They sound good. The drummer, Simon Phillips, is a monster, especially on the mid-late stuff. Before Pete introduces the additional 12 musicians onstage he says, "We had to hire 366 people to replace Keith Moon." He looks kind of sad. What's wrong, Pete? He said he wasn't gonna windmill but he does anyway. *Corgeous*.

The show is sponsored by Budweiser, and after the show, the big video screen says: The Who were brought to you by Budweiser. Please drive home safely. That would have killed Keith.

I knew the critics were going to piss all over the event—the show of the Who of being over-40 and deaf and greedy. For coming back when they've already said farewell three times. Who cares? No fan in that stadium would have cared if they came out in wheelchairs. Cause they're the Who and we love them. Simple as that. Even Pete's new song about being friendly. *Crite*. Dave Marsh said the show was pathetic. So who's he anyway? He sat in his seat through the show and wasn't even ashamed to say so.

Don't let 'em get to you guys, they're just jealous. Fuck 'em. And Pete, if they say your nose is too big, tell them their lousy noses are too small.

After the show, I dragged my sister around the entire stadium twice looking for the backstage entrance which was located right next to gate A, B, C or D, depending on which yellow-breasted moron you asked for directions at Giants Stadium. I had a backstage pass, O.K., but the fascists at the Will-Call window wouldn't give it to me because I didn't have the right ID on me. I should've punched my way straight through the glass and squeezed that woman's neck until her snotty, uptight little hen's face turned blue. That's exactly what Keith Moon would have done. God I miss Keith.

Anyway, I was hell-bent on getting backstage. "Why do you want to go backstage?" Billy yelled halfway through the show. "There's more rock and roll in these five square feet," she said, "than you'll ever find backstage." "I know," I cried, "but I want to meet Pete. I just want to say hi to him."

L.L. Cool J from page 52

Who directed the "Calif" video? That's one of my favorite videos.

Rick Rubin and another director, I don't remember his name. We were just making something different. I'm bugged. I'm my own artist. My own person. I'm not worried about new artists coming out. Rappers, singers, it doesn't bother me. I'm not worried about the ones that were there before me. As long as I do L.L. Cool J correctly, as long as I can conduct the L.L. Cool J musical thing correctly, I won't have any problems. Because being me was cool before, so I can be me now. I don't have to be anybody else. I have to flow with the times. I can't be L.L. in '84 when it's '89. I have to be L.L. in '89. In '92 I have to be L.L. in '92 or I'm out of here.

You've got to reinvent yourself all the time. Exactly.

Do you lose yourself onstage?

I can be onstage rapping or rhyming to a record and be thinking about something else. I'll be rhyming and thinking about people at home and what's going on. I'm serious. It's just wild. I'll be thinking what would my grandfather be thinking if he'd been seeing me now. I think about my grandfather a lot onstage.

There's something about your delivery on "I'm That Type of Guy" that's not just sexy but it's like you hear it and it's like, "yeah I know that." It's real.

It's straight up. I was just coming from the heart. I'm the type of guy. You're the type of guy. I just really meant that. I don't lie.

You don't really believe that if you had a girlfriend, she might walk out on you at any time, forever? I feel like you can't put murder past no one. You can't put something past anybody. Quote unquote: Everybody's vulnerable. Including L.L. Cool J. I made that song, I could be either guy accordingly. I could be sneaking up on somebody could be sneaking up on mine. It's 360 degrees, no matter how you look at it.

Do you like that feeling of always being on the edge? I love the edge. I'm Larry Flygman right now. I'm J.R. Ewing in the world. I love it. I eat it up. It's like blood for a pit bull. It's the best thing for me. I'm on the edge. In the world of rappers I'm the one.

But you're alone...

Not only alone. But hated by a lot of rappers.

Well everyone is. The bigger you get, the more people criticize you or dislike you. Or like you. Everyone has that happen.

You know what's unfortunate about that is the world takes notice more to the people that criticize.

Nah, I don't think so.

Let's put it this way. Bad things get more attention than good things. That's why Eyewitness News shows bad things all day. They don't say, "Oh, an old lady bought some ice cream today and a little puppy was found." Who gives a fuck? But if three people are shot at, yeah oh yeah. People are drawn to that shit.

For the short term, but for the long term they don't remember that shit. It's the long term that people remember.

I'm glad you said that 'cause that makes me feel good. 'Cause maybe somebody will forget some of those

negative comments. When they come to the show they might forget all the shit they ever heard about me and just be into L.L.

Mostly that's your strength and weakness. I guess you need to work off of what you've done before. It's your baggage, it's your life. But that's kinda what makes it challenging, too.

To overcome all those obstacles. It's really that God gives me strength to just crush everything in my path. I just want to crush everything in my path. And hopefully nothing will be in my path. Hopefully I'll just have to jump over a couple of twigs and keep going.

Well good luck.

It seems pretty obvious L.L. doesn't have many conversations with white girls like me. And, likewise, I don't have that many conversations with rap musicians. But I have more access to his world—even if it is superficial, watching the NYC black video show on UHF or whatever—than L.L. will ever have to mine.

Lyle Hysen, drummer of NYC indie-rock band Das Damen was recently hanging out at our apartment and we were playing the new NWA CD and watching our favorite rap videos. We wondered if Easy-E and Professor Griff hang out and turn each other on to new hot white underground rock culture. Like, "Yo Griff, check out this new Dinosaur Jr. vid, man!"

I decide to go over to CBGB's and ask people hanging out front waiting to see Live Skull and Die Kreuzen just what type of guy L.L. Cool J really is to them.

What does L.L. Cool J mean to you?

Bob Bert (drummer, Pussy Galore): I came across his path once and he was very nasty to me. I said, "Hi, how're you doing?" and he just walked right by me with gold chains waving. The guy walking behind him with all his records was real nice. His DJ, it was at Chun King recording studio. We'd get ousted from our time because L.L. would show up to do something. "L.L.'s comin', man, gotta go."

What do you think of L.L.?

Phranc (folk singer): I think he's very stylish. I like his hat.

Do you think he could be a big sex symbol for white America?

No. Ha ha ha ha. I don't think I have to elaborate on that. I don't know, watching the video doesn't turn me on. I mean, him in his red bathrobe doesn't do a thing for me, but him in his T-shirt with his hat is really handsome and dynamic. I went out and bought a Kangol hat after I became a fan. He's a fashion inspiration.

What type of guy do you think L.L. Cool J is?

Don Fleming (singer/guitarist, B.A.L.L. and Velvet Monkeys): I'd say he's a pretty cool guy. Pretty suave. I generally really like his things. This ballad, "I Need Love," that was my favorite.

Do you think L.L. Cool J could ever be as big as Michael Jackson?

I don't think so. I don't know if anybody can for that matter. Michael's got too many years in the biz.

Well Batman is bigger than Michael Jackson.

Well that's true, but only for the moment.

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But our hell could go on forever.

I was listening to all this rap on what was once a DC go-go station and was getting bummed out by it. All these raps were just long-winded stories. Like Bruce Springsteen. Too many words and the story just goes on and on. The music starts getting tired. And L.L.'s not doing too much to help the situation. I like his stuff better than most. I don't know, man. It's getting to where he doesn't understand white music and most white people don't understand rap. I think there's a rift where white people aren't keeping up that much anymore. They don't know that much about the different artists and the different songs. And I don't see that improving.

fied oversight with a drug as toxic as Q. I am not prepared for anarchy. I am not prepared to open the floodgates so that anybody can take anything at any time without any regulation."

For Callen, qualified oversight means coordinating studies with the FDA. But many in the AIDS community see it very differently. "My goal is to take the federal government and the academics out of the loop for treating patients," says Dr. Levin. "I think the practicing physician is best equipped to evaluate the efficacy of the drug."

The FDA disagrees. It has launched an investigation into Inform's treatment program to see if there are grounds for criminal prosecution. But attorney Curtis Ponzi, who represents Inform and two of the doctors involved in the underground treatment program, says "what they are doing is within the spirit if not the letter of the law." And Project Inform has secured a formidable team of lawyers to battle their case, including the FDA's own Washington, DC-based law firm, Wyle, Gotshall and Marges.

The FDA has so far not attempted to stop the treatment program, and regardless of its final conclusions, its investigation will doubtless continue beyond Inform's projected completion date of September 1. "Personality," says Delaney, "I would be shocked if the FDA ever conducted a swift investigation of anything."

We should soon know if Compound Q proves to be the effective treatment everyone hopes or just another bust. Either way, the underground treatment program has changed forever the way drug trials are conducted.

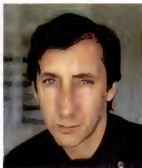
Compound Q from page 83

instructed its research department to draft a protocol for a phase-two efficacy study of Compound Q, "if and when toxicity concerns are resolved."

"I do genuinely believe in the concept that it's a big war, and there's room for multiple strategies," Callen continued. "I am sympathetic to the desire to present a unified face, and I don't think it serves any purpose for us to go to war with each other in the mainstream press, which has never been very helpful or friendly to us anyway. But I don't think it's necessary that we all agree with each other all the time. Call me paternalistic if you want, I believe that there needs to be quali-

Kids Are Alright

The



Comparison

Shopping Guide by Robert Sheffield

You thought they were dead and buried. But they're back, and they're all old enough to be Debbie Gibson's dad. It's not just the Who and the Stones, either. It's a movement. While Bobby Brown and New Kids on the Block—all not even born yet when the Who first sang "My Generation"—dominate in record stores, Jefferson Airplane, Ringo Starr, the Bee Gees, Danny Ocean, the Wilbury, the Doobie Brothers and Queen—not to mention Anderson, Wakeman, Bruford and Howe—are challenging their dominion, taking on a bunch of telegenic post-teens the way they took on Montavanni and Herb Alpert 25 years ago. Can the old coats outrank a bunch of kids with MIDI smarts and 900 numbers?

Bill Wyman of the Rolling Stones, taking no chances, married a girl Debbie Gibson's age (19). Nice work if you can get it. Paul McCartney is banking his comeback dollars on disciple Elvis Costello. Lou Reed's new act is a U2 imitation. And what's David Bowie doing with George Michael's beard, anyway? The young guys want the teen market. The old guys want the teen market, too. We've got new kids on the block, but the old guys want the black block. It's a turf war. You can't tell the players without a scorecard.

RINGO VS. MARTIKA

ROOTS

Ringo: Pop stardom. Martika: Children's television.

CURRENT CAREER

Ringo: Children's television. Martika: Pop stardom.

CUTE FACTOR

Ringo: Adorably high (once upon a time). Martika: Highly adorable.

DRIVE TIME

Ringo: First man ever to sing. Martika: Probably thinks Billy Ocean made it up.

NURSERY RHYME TIME

Ringo: Singing "Octopus's Garden" he carved pop music over into children's folklore. Martika: Singing "We all fall down" in "Toy Soldiers" she carries children's folklore over into pop music.

DAVID BOWIE VS. BOBBY BROWN

FIRST BAND

Bowie: David Jones and the Lower Third.

Brown: New Edition.

REASON FOR LEAVING

Bowie: Greed. Brown: Greed.

ROLE MODELS

Bowie: Told Rolling Stone: "Heller was the first superstar. He really did it right."

Brown: Told the Boston Globe: "I wanna be richer than Donald Trump."

PETE TOWNSHEND VS. DEBBIE GIBSON

GARAGELAND

Townshend: Wrote "My Generation" in a plush, respectable London hotel, struggling to make it sound like he scraped it together in a garage.

Gibson: Wrote "Only In My Dreams" in her parents' garage, trying to make sound like it belonged in a plush, respectable hotel.

ELECTRIC YOUTH

Townshend: "Hope I die before I get old."

Debbie: "Don't waste your life on a dream/Take it to the opposite extreme."

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

Townshend: Smashed his guitar onstage, unleashing furious shouts of bicycle-chain noise in a cloud of smoke and broken strings.

Gibson: Wore ripped jeans on the cover of her first album.

THE ROLLING STONES VS. NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

REASON FOR EXISTING

Stones: The blues had a baby and they named it rock'n'roll.

New Kids: Maurice Starr had New Edition and they sued him.

REBELS WITHOUT A CLUE

Stones: Dared to carry drugs across national borders, sleep with teenagers, piss on gas station walls.

New Kids: Dared to have a lead singer whose nickname at school is "Wedgie."

SOME GIRLS

Stones: Mick Jagger's pouty lips, slinky eyelashes, long hair and cute buns made him sexually dangerous.

New Kids: They sing like girls, but Joe MacIntyre reached puberty after Hange Tough was recorded. These days the Kids have to sing "Please Don't Go Girl" in a lower key.



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